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Putting yourself on the line: writers teaching writing in primary schools

Ian Eyres

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1

Introduction: Writers and teachers

Writing is central to the school curriculum. The ability to write is a valuable skill in itself and one which is both essential to success in written assessments and which gives access to wider curriculum learning (Czerniewska, 1992).

Teachers in English primary schools are expected to teach all curriculum subjects competently, and although most have subject strengths and specialisms, it cannot be expected that the majority will be specialists in teaching writing. It does not seem unreasonable, however to speculate that those teachers who do have particular interests and abilities in respect of writing may have particular insights into how to teach children to write. This study investigates a varied group of teachers who also consider themselves to be writers, and in particular the ways in which they understand and talk about the place of

writing in their own lives and in their teaching. Through the use of narrative interviews it seeks to understand two key questions. Firstly, what influences shape the professional identities of writer-teachers? By examining the life history of the participants it attempts to identify the particular events, circumstances and experiences which have contributed both to their expertise and to the sense they have of themselves as practising writers. Secondly, do teachers who are writers draw on a writer identity in their teaching? Do the children they teach benefit from having a writer as a teacher and do these writer-teachers consciously (or otherwise) make use of their writer identity to enhance their teaching?

Historical and educational context

The writer-teacher participants in this study represent several generations. For some, their history as teachers stretches back as far as the early 1960s while others have taught only in recent years of the 21st century. As will be explained in Chapter 3, the focus of the research changed over time with a pilot phase laying the ground for a substantive phase based on a final set of interviews which provide the main data for this thesis. In the first phase, the way writer-teachers responded to the curriculum policy context in which they were teaching was a central issue, while in the second, substantive phase the focus was more precisely on the two research questions articulated above. Prevailing orthodoxies have changed over the years, and more recently, orthodoxies have been buttressed by a high degree of prescription which at least some and possibly many teachers, appear to have embraced. Even in the second phase, therefore, in order to understand the accounts of the various teachers' lives and pedagogies, some knowledge of the policy and curriculum climate is necessary. Important stages in the development of the English curriculum have been marked by the publication of key government reports and policies. English primary school practice in the 1960s, and for some years to follow, was greatly influenced by the child-centred approach of

the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967; Alexander, 2007). In respect of writing, the report endorses a tendency to foreground the composition of complete texts which express stories and children's own experiences (CACE, 1967, para. 601). Whilst not advocating their neglect, Plowden suggests that the traditional concern for 'inaccuracies' should be subordinated to helping children express 'their meaning' clearly and economically (CACE, 1967, para. 605). The term *creative writing*, meaning 'free, fluent and copious writing on a great variety of subject matter' (CACE, 1967, para 219) is closely associated with the Plowden era, though the term is used quite cautiously in the report itself.

'Creative writing' received some criticism, (not least from teachers themselves) (Bullock 1975) for sometimes advancing an overly poetic and artificial form of language, but Plowden itself emphasised the need for sincere or authentic writing since, 'The best writing of young children springs from the most deeply felt experience' (CACE, 1967, para 605).

Despite its powerful influence, it was less than a decade before Plowden was to be challenged by the prime minister, James Callaghan in a speech given at Ruskin College, Oxford. Although he shrank from actually calling for a return to a more traditional curriculum, he expressed the concern that 'the new informal methods of teaching which seem to produce excellent results when they are in well-qualified hands but are much more dubious when they are not' (Callaghan, 1976).

However, the Bullock report (Bullock, 1975), published around the same time, echoes and amplifies many of the sentiments expressed by Plowden, for example the close relationship between the self of the writer and the text. The autobiographical element of all writing is acknowledged, in so far as 'in offering his [*sic*] feelings and beliefs the child is

in fact presenting himself in the light he would like to be seen in' (Bullock, 1975, p.165). Bullock highlights an important deficiency when 'by far the largest amount of writing done in schools is explicitly or implicitly directed at the teacher' (Bullock, 1975, p.166) and that most of the rest is written for the writer him/herself or for other pupils. It argues that the quality of children's writing can benefit from exposure to a wider audience. Authenticity is enhanced, it is claimed, where writing has a clear purpose (Bullock, 1975). Bullock's full title, *A language for life*, reveals an emphasis on using language and literacy in real-life contexts.

In the mid 1980s, the (English) National Writing project did much to disseminate the pedagogy known as *process writing* (National Writing Project, 1990). This approach is associated closely with the work of Donald Graves (Graves, 1983) as well as the much larger and longer-lived US National Writing Project (NWP, 2014) and is based on children developing their own meanings through successive draft stages to the point where their texts can be published in the classroom. The key features of process writing have been identified as: control and ownership (on the part of the text's own author); drafting and revision; conferencing; publishing and teacher modelling (Smith and Elley, 1998). A central principle is that children learn to write by writing and from sharing their work with their peers and their teacher. Much store is set by the establishment of a social and physical environment conducive to writing and publication.

Although widely used across the English speaking world (Smith and Elley, 1998; Applebee and Langer, 2009) in the closing decades of the last century and the beginning of this, serious shortcomings have been identified. In a review of research into the effectiveness of different writing pedagogies, McCarthy and Ro (2011) identify lack of attention to specific features of writing, teachers' overly rigid imposition of the sequence of writing,

pre-writing and revision and a predominance of narrative texts as shortcomings of the process model. A study of teacher-student dialogue during writing conferences (McCarthy, 1994), while broadly endorsing the entailed process of co-construction, highlights the risk that a teacher's lack of sensitivity to a particular student's background and experiences may frustrate a young writer's efforts. The later conclusion that this may be a matter of valuing 'certain students' texts over those of other students from diverse backgrounds' (McCarthy and Ro, 2011, p. 275) has certain resonances with the observation that 'most research seems to involve middle class children', perhaps because the 'voice' developed by some children may not be considered acceptable (Smith and Elley, 1998). Moreover, children's free choice of topic risks the classroom publication of texts which reflect such undesirable dispositions as racism and sexism, or which may constitute personal bullying (Lensmire, 1994).

A metastudy of 123 publications investigating writing instruction for adolescents found process approaches less effective than those based on explicit instruction (Graham & Perrin, 2007). The possibility that one factor is the inconsistency with which teachers apply the approach (Pritchard and Honeycutt, 2007), or differences in teachers' beliefs and values (Troia and Maddox, 2004) is supported by the finding that process writing teachers who have experienced appropriate professional development are more effective (Graham & Perrin, 2007). Such variation of practice is also not conducive to success in increasingly prescriptive public examinations (Applebee and Langer, 2009). However, it has been argued (Pritchard and Honeycutt, 2007) that there is a substantial body of research showing process writing to be more effective than other approaches in improving writing attitudes.

An early critique (Smagorinsky, 1987) of Graves's (1983) seminal research is often cited (*e.g.* Wray and Medwell, 2006; Myhill and Jones, 2007; Myhill, 2005), to show a lack of reliable evidence for the pedagogy it advocates. In this case, as the author stresses, the focus is on research methodology (which he convincingly portrays as partisan in the selection of the evidence it reports –or does not report) rather than the pedagogy itself.

Although the above approaches are often associated with their respective historical periods, it cannot be assumed that each represented universal practice. It is probably more accurate to think of them as models which appear to have influenced the practice of a proportion of, but by no means all teachers. A number of studies conducted in the decades up to 1998 (when, as will become explained shortly, practice became much more uniform) found the traditional model, focusing heavily on the product, with teachers largely concerned with the suppression of errors of spelling and grammar and the maintenance of a silent working environment to be thriving (Smith and Elley, 1998). A survey by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI, 1978) found much classroom writing of the period to consist of exercises, which were often directed at the suppression of past errors. A study of teachers and pupils in Sheffield, found that two thirds of the writing done in the course of a week was formal exercises (Stallard, 1988). These findings also confirmed the traditional view that the only audience for written work is the teacher. Many children believed they wrote in school simply because their teacher told them to (Bearne, 1998).

Teachers' freedom to accept or reject particular pedagogies began to be curtailed with the 1988 Education Act (Education Reform Act, 1988), which reduced the powers of local authorities (formerly the makers of local educational policy) and established a National Curriculum with its own testing regime. Test results would be published, in principle to

establish a market in which parents would be able to compare and choose between schools (using so-called 'league tables', compiled unofficially by local and national media, but nonetheless important to schools). It also established a new inspectorate, OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) in order to oversee the new regime. Classroom teachers made virtually no contribution to the development of the National Curriculum, which was written by government appointees (Gillard, 2011).

Although the first version of the National Curriculum for English (DfE, 1988) was based on the fairly eclectic approach of the Cox report (DES/WO, 1989), (it included, for example, significant elements from the (English) National Writing Project), increasing central pressure for demonstrably improved performance and the influence of OFSTED soon brought schools to prioritise the pursuit of better test results (Cox, 1999). Initially, many schools attempted to fit the requirements of the National Curriculum into their existing curriculum arrangements, but successive requirements made this increasingly difficult. The earlier focus on the child thus gave way to a focus on the detail of the curriculum.

This focus was intensified in 1998 with the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (DfEE, 1998a), which required a pedagogy heavily influenced by genre theory (Beard, 1999). The genre approach identifies certain grammatical and lexical features as being associated with particular genres or text types, which in turn are associated with particular purposes for writing. The procedural genre, for example has the purpose of instructing the reader as to how to do something (it may be a recipe, for example) and characteristically puts its verbs into the imperative mood (Eyres, 2007). The focus of teaching is on the reproduction of such specified features

The expected learning outcomes differed from those of the National Curriculum in being set out in great detail and linked with the year and term in which they should be taught. A pedagogy based on whole-class teaching, working to strict timings during a daily *Literacy Hour* was also required.

The NLS represented a significant shift in the policy environment by dictating exactly *what* was to be taught, *how* it should be taught and even *when*. Another significant departure was in the implicit model of language presented. Instead of the socially and culturally grounded conceptualisation of Plowden and Bullock, written language is seen as an autonomous (B. Street, 1984) freestanding entity capable of being broken down into tiny parts for the purpose of teaching. Although, not statutory, rigorous enforcement by Ofsted and the threat of schools being judged as having ‘serious weaknesses’ or worse still, placed under ‘special measures’ meant that only a tiny number had the confidence not to comply fully with the NLS (Merry, 2004). The various pressures brought to bear on teachers and headteachers fomented in many schools an atmosphere of ‘anxiety and literalism’ (Frater, 2000, p. 109) which meant the strategies were followed to the letter.

The researcher’s perspective

The genesis of the questions which drive this study lies in my own experience as a teacher of writing and a writer. Within an interpretive methodology (see Chapter 3) a researcher must bring their existing knowledge -whether it be personal or derived from research or other sources-to bear on new information, and that knowledge is therefore an important research tool. If research findings arise out of the coming together of data gathered and the researcher’s interpretation, then it is important that readers be aware of this background of experience. For this reason, early in the research I composed an account of my own life history as a writer and a teacher of writing. Reading it now I can see many elements which

relate to my subsequent reading and to the interview data, but the text which I reproduce below takes no account of later thinking, being offered as a statement of where I started from. The account has been lightly edited, to reduce length and remove some irrelevancies, but it has not been in any way 'corrected' in the light of more recent thinking.

Writing and teaching: a personal account

I have heard it said that people have few memories of learning to read, because the process is usually painless, but many memories of learning to write. My earliest memories of reading involve little more than situations where I realised I was able to do it. Early memories of writing are more uncomfortable, though none date back beyond my 7th birthday, shortly after which I moved house and to a new school, in Surrey. I have no memory at all of writing in my first infant school, in London. My mother says the teacher forced me to write with my right hand when I naturally picked up the pencil with my left, though I suspect if she really had I'd have remembered the experience.

I have always found handwriting physically difficult, and until the age of about nine I held a pencil in a tight five-fingered grip, manoeuvring my whole hand laboriously around the shape of a word. The pressure applied made the resulting mess more like engraving than writing, and the sweat from my overworked hand made the mess worse. Many of my fellow infants were in the habit of making their own kind of mess, erasing their mistakes by vigorously rubbing the page with a licked finger. When, in the middle of a writing session my new teacher felt the need of an example of this practice (which she poetically named 'spit and polish'), mine was the story (or 'news' or whatever) that she chose to denounce to the class. Although technically innocent, I mentally pleaded guilty to the crime of messy writing. Whereas my first memories of reading are mostly set in my home, my first memory of writing was this blow cast by the pedagogical authorities.

On entering 'the juniors', we were taught cursive script through daily handwriting patterns and exercises which were always marked out of ten. On a really good day I might aspire to a seven, but four was much more normal and I clocked up a few zeros over the year. At this stage I understood writing to mean handwriting. Throughout the junior school I saw writing as a pretty pointless activity. Project work meant aimless disguised copying of books about subjects I wasn't at all interested in, and I generally found ways of avoiding the task. As for story writing, I was also well aware of the difference between one of my grudgingly delivered one-page efforts and real stories, the sort I enjoyed reading in books. The story writing was not helped by my realisation that I could write down ideas at only a tiny fraction of the rate at which they occurred to me. But story writing was at least only a weekly imposition. Comprehension exercises were a daily drudgery, made worse by the incomprehensible rule that answers had to be in whole sentences.

Two events stand in contrast to this picture of general alienation I am painting. One Sunday, when I was seven or eight, I was taken by my grandmother, who worked for the BBC, to Broadcasting House for the morning. She and a colleague showed me round the empty radio studios and I thought it was all just wonderful. The next day, at school, for once I had something to say, and I remember writing four pages (four lines was more like my norm) and being sent to show the headteacher my achievement. When I was eleven, one term's project was 'transport', and I spent many happy afternoons, unloading facts I had memorised from *The Observer's Book of Automobiles* onto the pages of an exercise book. Looking back, I see both these as examples of expressive writing (Britton, 1970). I had no real desire or need to communicate these things to an audience – I just had them inside me and they needed to come out.

It is interesting to note how, at the time, I interpreted writing pedagogy in moral terms. Clearly it was bad to be messy (a kind of badness you could be punished for in a variety of ways, just as the neat could be rewarded) and I also saw spelling corrections as the

punishment of avoidable lapses rather than teaching strategies. Similarly, the need to produce a 'fair copy' was the moral consequence of not doing things right the first time.

At the end of my primary schooling, the headteacher told my parents that my 11+ papers were virtually illegible and that if they had been marked by someone outside the school I would have failed. However, they must have been marked in-house, as I moved on to a very traditional boys' grammar school, where things improved a little. The school set no great store by neatness and none at all by such things as creativity and expression, all of which suited me well. I didn't enjoy writing 'the diary of a penny' any more than I'd enjoyed writing my daily 'news', but provided I kept things legible and didn't make too many errors of spelling and punctuation I got by unnoticed. One thing I did enjoy (perverse as this may sound) was grammar lessons. I think I just enjoyed seeing how elements of language fit together and how rules can be used to reduce the complex to simplicity. I was also able to exercise this interest through lessons in French, German, Russian, Latin and Greek, though I never linked the knowledge to the idea of proficiency in writing. Increasingly, writing was the medium for learning and assessment in other subjects and attention was on the message rather than the medium.

When I entered the grammar school, English was the one subject I knew I would drop as soon as I could, but ironically I found myself taking it in the sixth form. The translations and comprehensions which I'd been able to complete without exertion led me to opt for French and German, and as to date English had required no real work at all it seemed the obvious third subject. I think it would be fair to say that I was unprepared for sixth form writing.

I was mostly bewildered by the essay titles, and homework usually involved wringing a succession of disconnected sentences, which I hoped were in some way related to the question, onto the page. Response was largely by way of a (letter) grade, with the occasional unhelpful comment. The one that sticks in my mind was “It’s high time you started thinking for yourself”. Although this must have been nearly a decade before my professional involvement in pedagogy, I recognised it as bad teaching. After collecting some grades which at least amuse my own children, I signed up for retakes.

We had a new teacher for French, and she began the second lesson by giving back our homework and declaring that it was quite plain that no one had taught us how to write an essay. In five minutes she explained the great mystery (introduction, three arguments in support of the proposition, conclusion). This was an epiphany: not only had I not realised that there was a recognised structure to the school essay, I also had not realised that writing could be taught. Up to that point I thought it was a matter of knowing the answer, and that if you did the writing would look after itself. The improvement consequent on this revelation was enough to get me into university.

At university I encountered an educational approach I had never previously encountered: encouragement. I also, through the tutorial system came to see writing as part of an academic dialogue: not only did essays come back with questions (oral or written) attached, but my attempts to answer those questions were taken seriously and helped me develop my thinking further. It also helped that I was at last writing about something I was interested in, language, and that I was able to see the tasks as problem-solving rather than as attempts to guess the ‘correct’ interpretation of some literary author’s intentions. In so far as I was taking existing knowledge and experiences, together with my reading and making something new and ‘my own’ out of it, my writing was for the first time creative.

It was during this period that writing became an integral part of everyday life, rather than something to be got through before watching Z Cars. By this, I mean that I was planning and reflecting on my writing even when I was not sitting at a desk and making marks, though it would be some years before I considered such activity a legitimate part of the writing process. I was also developing writing behaviours and dispositions which would stay with me for decades.

The first of these was procrastination. In my first term I rarely began to write more than two days before a deadline; I could not commit myself to paper before I absolutely had to. As I became more confident, I did start earlier and earlier, but however early I started I found I was always writing right up to the deadline. One of my finals projects had quite a flexible deadline, and although the practical work was done, it was entirely unwritten after all the exams were over. Finally I resolved one evening to start the job and not leave the library till it was finished; I left and went to bed at around 7a.m. Another was the fear of the blank page and the word limit (though minimum requirement is a better word than limit). I always found it difficult to start and writing was heavy going until the minimum output had been achieved. Some of the difficulty must have come from a reluctance to 'get to the point' too early and leave myself with nothing more to say. The consequence of this approach was that I had usually set myself up for explaining several extensive ideas, which I was more than happy to do, since the strain of filling a requisite number of pages was now behind me. I imagine these epics to have been less than tightly structured.

Another significant influence on my skill as a writer was the experience of writing extended texts in French, which brought a certain agility at sentence level. I learnt that a French sentence may well have a different structure from its English counterpart: a nominalisation may work better than a clause, for example. Sometimes restructuring a sentence could get

round a gap in my vocabulary too. I find when I am writing that I still consider alternative ways of structuring my thoughts.

I had intended this foray into my early writing experiences as a brief preamble to the real business of looking at how, as a primary teacher, I taught writing, and am amazed not so much at how much I've written so far, but that having taken the story well into my early adulthood, there are many milestones on the road to my current state of expertise still to pass. However, there is a degree of symbiosis between my later writing and my teaching, and I shall be drawing on some of that writing as evidence of my practice, beliefs and values, so I feel that this is a good point at which to turn to teaching.

Like any PGCE course, my training for teaching in middle schools was rather hurried and my recall of it somewhat sketchy. I do remember sessions on 'creative writing' and although some store was set by the idea of stimulus for writing, one idea which really stuck with me came in the form of a warning. The lecturer leading the session told of a session he had led with a previous year group. After a long period of 'stimulus', involving candles, incense and psychedelic music in a darkened room, the students were told they could start writing. Of course they were all baffled as to what was required, as the stimulus was no preparation for the act of writing. At the time I took this to mean that the writers needed to be 'given' some ideas and possibly some words and phrases from which to build their writing. At a later stage of my career I would have looked for ways of tapping into the ideas that arise when a mind is allowed to wander freely.

In the late 1970s the influence of Plowden (CACE, 1967) was still clear and group- and individual-based teaching approaches did imply the use of children's writing in other

subjects (through topic work) as a way of monitoring their learning. It did not occur to me that they might also be learning through writing.

My recollection of the place of writing in my own classroom during the first few years of my teaching career is similarly sketchy, and I have to suspect that that may be because of a lack of intellectual coherence to the regime. With hindsight, I think I can see three elements to it, which I shall call routine activities, writing for learning and creative writing.

Even at the time, I thought of the rationale for most routine activities as their being part of the ritual of schooling. The resources in my classroom included a pile of green textbooks called *Primary English, Book 2*, which I felt a responsibility to work through in the course of each year. The book had twenty chapters, (I reckoned on one chapter per fortnight), each beginning with a comprehension activity (just like the ones I had ground through in my own school days) and including various short exercises around themes of spelling, punctuation, vocabulary development and sentence grammar. I began each year diligently working through the chapters, but as topic work and other activities developed I was quite happy to see *Primary English* squeezed out of the timetable. I don't think I ever got beyond chapter seven and eventually I stopped using it altogether. One thing that did impress me was the calming effect the book had on my second year junior (in the current terminology, Year 4) pupils. No one seemed to mind doing the work the book asked for and I formed the impression that the tasks were just demanding enough not to seem too boring whilst, thanks to the very familiar working routines they entailed, they left the children feeling secure and comfortable, with no risk of their having misunderstood what to do. The other routine activities were regular handwriting practice, taught from the blackboard, using another textbook (Nelson Handwriting) and a weekly test of the spelling of twenty words I had taken

from the class's own writing. Like Primary English, the handwriting tended to get displaced by more interesting activities, but as the spelling was part of a routine which involved home it tended to continue through the year.

Writing was of course an essential part of learning outside of lessons labelled as 'language' (this was in the days before the National Curriculum (DfE, 1988) forcibly reinstalled the term 'English') and although this was still the heyday of topic work and 'personal research' I was keen to avoid the copying from books that had featured in my own primary education. The strategy in vogue was the use of work cards and work sheets made by the teacher: where these asked general questions they led straight back to copying, and where they asked questions linked to specific texts they were often little more than hand-crafted comprehension exercises. Although I would certainly have subscribed to the principle of children recording 'their own ideas' the strategies I had at my disposal fell far short of enabling this to happen. Other writing for topic work would include accounts of practical activities such as science experiments and observations, where children were translating their first-hand experiences into written text, in a way much more in keeping with Plowden's (CACE, 1967) recommendations.

Creative writing was something I saw as a weekly fixture on the timetable. Children would write a story (it was always called a story, even on those rare occasions when it wasn't one) during a single session on a midweek morning. My chief concern was to make sure that they had something to write about –that they would be able to make a swift start and not dry up too soon. To this end I would often outline more or less a whole story to the class, leaving an ending for them to complete. I would always stress that this was their story and my ideas were only suggestions and I would have been delighted to read any wholly original works,

but I was also nervous at the idea of leaving children unsure of what to write and therefore idle. (The inexperienced teacher is always wary of the negative potential of bored or idle children!). Another technique I would often use was to fill the blackboard with 'useful' words –ostensibly as an aid to spelling, but also as prompts to particular ideas. This preparation was the bulk of my contribution to the task. Once they had started writing, my job was to supply spellings (children brought me their word books and I saw the long queues that formed as evidence of my value in the classroom) and if I should happen to be free of spelling demands, to give *ad hoc* support, usually to children who were 'stuck'. My response to the resulting work was through marking it, choosing three misspelt words for each child to practice and learn (and using some of these words to compile the weekly class spelling list), drawing attention (with a red pen) to the errors of punctuation and sentence structure which I judged the most serious and finally adding a comment, usually of the 'What an exciting story' variety. Sometimes there would be additional advice on a point of sentence grammar or punctuation.

If anybody had asked me at the time why I was asking children to undertake 'creative writing' I would probably have said, to give them practice in writing independently. I had some hazy idea that this was a chance for children to 'express themselves' and my answer to many queries would be 'it's your story'. However, I think my deeper motivation is revealed in a retrospective account I wrote eight years into my career (Eyres, 1988): an attachment to the well-formed sentence. Perhaps thanks to my background in Chomskyan linguistics (*e.g.* Chomsky, 1965), I conceptualised language, and by extension writing, as the production of sentences so, as I wrote in 1988, 'So long as the sentences were well-formed, I was happy' (Eyres, 1988, p.3).

I am glad I returned to the 1988 account as without it I would have remained under the impression that my teaching of writing up to that time had been a farrago of tedious exercises, tests and uninspired sentence practice disguised as story writing. At that time, however, I was able to identify a number of practices related, however unwittingly on my part, to the process of writing itself. These I linked to the stages of pre-writing and rewriting (Smith, 1982). Prewriting, the stage at which the writer thinks through ideas, had been supported by my developing interest in educational drama. Often I would use drama sessions, which frequently gave children an explicitly developed narrative structure as well as rehearsed lines of dialogue as a starter for story writing. I had also been influenced by the teachers' books produced by that prophet of Plowdenism, Sybil Marshall (e.g. Marshall, 1963). Looking at these books (e.g. Marshall, 1979) now, what strikes me is how much they predicted the National Literacy Strategy, with their grammar and punctuation activities based on a text read by or to the whole class. However, this was a relatively small part of the diet, which also included a text which was usually gripping either because of its content or the quality of the writing (and often both), many opportunities for interaction in pairs and small groups and numerous links with other, especially creative subjects. By the time children got to writing their story they had usually given the theme a great deal of thought and already invested some energy in a personal response (for example, by painting a picture or making a model). Marshall's suggestions for writing gave ways of avoiding a simple retelling of the focus text. She might suggest telling the story from the point of view of one of the characters, or what happened before or after the events which unfold in the story. These opportunities for transformation gave children the chance to remake the text in their own way.

Although I still set no store by the redrafting of extended prose texts (and was temperamentally opposed to the idea of a 'fair copy' with its implicit high status for

handwriting), I did encourage children to carry out extensive redrafting when they wrote poetry. Some of my teaching techniques I had remembered from my PGCE course, but many others came from the books of Sandy Brownjohn (e.g. Brownjohn, 1980), which emphasised the craft of writing through the use of a wide range of poetic devices and forms, from simple alliterative verses to sonnets. As well as encouraging careful revision, my poetry lessons also encouraged a fast flow of writing at an early stage, anticipating the 'flow and revise' principle of the process approach I would later adopt. The approach I developed to the weekly spelling list –incorporating it into a prepared dictation which children were given quite a long time to revise gave practice in editing.

I should perhaps mention here a significant step in my own development as a writer. At my second Christmas as a teacher, it fell to me to produce the junior department's Christmas performance. My ambitious plan to base the whole thing around children's improvisations gave way, under pressure of time, to my hastily writing a script (much of it still inspired by children's improvisations). The result was enormous fun and repeated on an annual basis until I left the school nearly a decade later. This kind of writing was a departure for me in two important ways. First of all, I found the process remarkably easy. Through teaching drama I had learnt how to break a story down into dramatically purposeful scenes and once a basic framework had been mapped out I found that the dialogue just flowed as fast as I could write it down. Secondly, I was writing for a real audience –not just the eventual audience of parents but also the children who had to buy into the script before they could be expected to sell it. Interestingly, revision still did not figure largely in the process. Small (and sometimes large) changes would be made in rehearsal in order to make a scene work better, or to make a line deliverable by its actor, but I didn't think of these as changes to the text, rather as changes after the text. I make no claims that these plays were great works of literature (in truth they were mostly a succession of bad jokes), but all concerned seemed to

enjoy them and they did make me feel for the first time able to claim the title 'writer' in the eyes of the children I taught.

Looking back on this period –about the first seven years I spent in the classroom, I can see my practice develop from a rather confused start, to an approach where writing is increasingly tied up with other creative activities within the curriculum. Ideas were developed through drama and visual media, as well as through writing and sometimes crafted through revision. However, although I had, from day one, been keen to give children their own voice through writing, this was something that, in reality, I had rarely done, opting instead to elicit a quite closely defined response to the stimulus (or stimuli) I chose to supply. My understanding of the craft of writing was also hazy, with no real thought given to the process of writing and how writing differs from transcribed speech. One important casualty of this ignorance was any real thought (except for in respect of poetry) about whole-text structures.

The development of a creative arts bias in my teaching stemmed in part from my following a long (4 terms) course in educational drama. The academic side of this led me to contemplate re-entry to higher education, and following a slightly bumpy ride I found myself pursuing an MA degree in education by Independent Studies, which gave me a rigorous reintroduction to the practice of academic writing. It was through this programme that I was introduced to the writing of Donald Graves (Graves, 1983) and the school of developmental or process writing, which I introduced to my class at the beginning of the next school year. The children's progress over the course of a year was the subject of the final project for my degree and I later summarised the approach for publication (Bearne, 1998, pp87-90). Graves's book is

highly detailed and practical, but what I found made the approach easy to implement was that it is based on a small number of principles, which I summarised at the time as:

- Children are considered to be writers;
- As writers, children are given all necessary time and support to develop their work fully (e.g. drafts may be continued from day to day);
- Writing is the property of its author, who is responsible for all decisions, including, for example, whether to continue, redraft or publish;
- Writing is supported by a community of writers, which includes the teacher. Writers have the opportunity to model the process for each other, write together as a class and comment on and question each other's work in progress in a positive way. The community also provides an audience for completed texts which are published in the classroom;
- A questioning approach, encouraging writers to engage in a 'dialogue with the text' This is encouraged initially through regular individual teacher-pupil conferences, and then through such strategies as whole-class sharing of drafts. In a similar way commercially published texts are questioned from the perspective of writers;
- Writing is conceived as a process through which meanings are expressed, clarified and elaborated.

(adapted from Eyres, 1988, pp. 41-42)

Looking back, I can see that some of the above may be a little disingenuous. The questions in a writer's conference often amounted to strong hints, which with more biddable children were tantamount to instructions. However, I think I can honestly say that if the writer resisted my suggestions I would let them have their way. The list also doesn't mention the

role of the teacher as a gatekeeper to publication. This enabled me to send children back to revise their text if for any reason (from spelling and punctuation to overall conception) I felt they could improve them. Adopting this approach to writing was an important departure for me in at least two ways: it brought me to focus on writing as a set of practices, and it raised the importance of the social context of writing as part of an overarching pedagogy.

The work of Frank Smith (*e.g* Smith, 1982) and others brought me to understand many aspects of my own writing behaviour as part of a legitimate and established set of practices. Whereas in the past I had considered the need for revision to be due to my failure to get my ideas straight in the first place, I could now see revision as a tool through which my text could be repeatedly improved. Ordering thoughts in my head whilst in the shower or washing up I could now identify as a legitimate part of the pre-writing stage of planning, or developing a specification. The separation of the two elements, composition (choosing the best words, phrases and larger structures to convey my meaning) and transcription (using spelling, punctuation and handwriting to fix those words on the page) let me see how being overly cautious over surface features (and I've always been one to read the dictionary rather than get on with the job) could seriously interrupt the flow of ideas with which an efficient writer can quickly assemble a first draft ready to refashion it through revision (making sure it says what is intended) and editing (making sure all conventions are observed). I have outlined the writing process in terms of my own understanding for two reasons. First, at the time I was practising my own skills as an academic writer and I therefore applied the learning to my own behaviour first. Secondly, teaching through a process approach requires the teacher to have a thorough (and 'from the inside') understanding of the writing process in order both to model that process to children and to be able to guide and support their developing mastery of it.

Having previously conceptualised writing largely as words and sentences on the page, and development largely in terms of 'better' words and more complex sentences, I now focussed my teaching on the development of a complex set of behaviours. In particular, I encouraged a two-stage strategy of flow and revision. Interestingly, the best practical support for fluent first-drafting came in ground rules which meant that I was not available for ad hoc support. Children were encouraged not to worry about perfect spelling, but to mark dubious words and be prepared to return to them at the editing stage. As one boy put it at the end of the first year, 'You can get all your ideas in the story before you bother about spelling. I think it's easier to cope with' (Eyres, 1988, p.66). Discussions in conferences always focussed on the meaning of a developing text, so that, for example, if a sentence was confused I would ask 'What do you really mean by that?' and give the writer time to articulate the thoughts orally as a rehearsal for recomposing the passage more clearly. In the past I had been reluctant to teach structural features explicitly, as I saw no evidence that such teaching translates into a child's own writing. The downside of this was that I had had no way of encouraging the development of children's syntactic repertoire. Now, through emphasising meaning and clarity, I had a strategy. It is worth mentioning here that this is just one example of how the process approach makes use of children's own spoken language to rehearse and develop their writing.

In the pursuit of inculcating certain desirable behaviour patterns in children I learnt the importance of the social. The approach to writing became 'something we do' and was supported by a number of structured and established social practices. Most prominent of these is the conference, a routine meeting which emphasises the primacy of meaning and establishes a particular pattern of questioning. Whole class sessions in which children

present finished drafts, or drafts in progress, draw on these questioning strategies (supported by ground rules about being positive) and reinforce them in children's minds, for use in pair and small group work. Modelling is a much more widely used strategy than instruction, and just as these practices model constructive questioning, so other occasions, especially 'writing together' model the process of writing itself. The simple rule that there are set daily periods when the whole class writes together encourages a flow of writing and my occasional participation as a fellow writer strengthens the community whilst I model the behaviour of an adult writer. Another important social element is the development of a sense of audience through the publication of work in the classroom. These small books became popular choices at reading time and children often gave each other positive feedback, and asked all kinds of questions. Published books were similarly shared and interrogated, and offered as models to emulate. This exposure to culturally established text types, alongside the knowledge of all kinds of texts children brought into the classroom and the development of a range of socially and culturally developed practices (such as the writing process itself) shows process writing pedagogy to be essentially socio-cultural in its nature.

Transcriptional features such as spelling and punctuation were not ignored in all this. Each child kept a 'look cover write check' book in which I recorded three words (taken from their work) weekly for them to practice. When a significant number of children needed help with a particular point (for example, use of speech marks) I would teach a lesson on it with the whole class or small group. Alternatively I might emphasise the point in a 'writing together' session. And of course, technical points could be raised with individuals in conferences. So far as possible, though, I would try to ensure that teaching about transcriptional features arose to meet a need in a developing text.

Although (against previously used criteria) I was more than satisfied with the quality of written texts children were producing, I saw progress in areas where I hadn't looked for it before. Children's confidence in themselves as writers had grown significantly, as had their sense of control over their writing. As well as representing a development of identity, this confidence displayed itself as an enthusiasm for writing, something which parents readily confirmed.

Working in a new school, for a while as a 'floating' teacher, I realised when working with younger children how much I had depended on the work of early years teachers in my work with older children. I could allow my teaching of surface features to follow children's meanings because such basic knowledge as the letters of the alphabet had been introduced lower down the school. Working with small children it became obvious that such matters as phonemic awareness do not arise spontaneously and so require teaching. However, it was also apparent that if children were encouraged to follow their mark-making instincts and be adventurous with the knowledge they had, then invented spelling and emergent writing were powerful ways of rehearsing and enlarging their repertoire. My fundamental belief that we learn to write through writing remained intact.

In my next post, as a peripatetic support teacher working in classes with bilingual pupils, my brief was to develop curricula accessible to all children and, in respect of writing, a number of teachers (and in some cases whole schools) chose to adopt a process approach to writing to this end. However, there were always some teachers who were not looking for radical changes to their practice and as the 1990s progressed and the curriculum became more centrally prescribed the scope for whole-class work diminished and I found myself developing practices which retained some of the central features of my earlier approach,

even on those occasions when I was working with bilingual children separately from the rest of the class. Ten children's texts which I discussed in an article for *The Primary English Magazine* (Eyres, 1997) still show important elements of a process approach, notably:

- the importance to the learner of making meaning;
- relegating attention to errors to second place;
- the value of using children's own experiences;
- the importance of talk in the process of writing.

A theme from my earlier practice, that of transformation, also reappears, as improvised dramas become cartoons and stories, stories become play scripts and so on.

The decade or so from the time I adopted process writing to the end of my period of working with bilingual learners was a period of some progress in my own development as a writer. Writing up projects for the MA, for the first time in my life to strict word limits, taught me to be more concise and that brevity can be a powerful aid to clarity. Revision to excise words (I had to lose almost a quarter of the penultimate draft of my final project) helped me to focus on what was really important and also forced attention onto the global purpose and structure of a piece. Like the children I was teaching I was beginning to see writing as a craft, when previously it had been a kind of loosely organised brainstorming. The invitation to contribute accounts of my practice to a number of publications (*e.g.* Eyres, 1996; 1998) raised my awareness of audience.

In December 1997, a few months before the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, I left the classroom for a job in initial teacher education. As coordinator of the English strand of the programme, my principal task was the introduction of both the Literacy Strategy pedagogy and the closely related English subject knowledge requirement for teacher

education students (DfEE, 1998b). All this had to be done under the watchful, sometimes aggressive eye of the OFSTED inspectorate. At the time I joked that my approach to writing had become illegal, but this covered a very deep sense of alienation from the new English curriculum in schools, with its heavy emphasis on grammar-based learning outcomes. I felt that none of my experience and knowledge of teaching writing was of value in my new role – it was something to be hidden rather than passed on to a new generation.

My sense of alienation was heightened by my experience as a primary school governor during this period. I witnessed many experienced and highly proficient teachers thrown into a panic, crystallised in the plea, 'Tell us what we have to do'. They felt compelled to jettison the practice of decades in the scramble to avoid the consequences (in terms of stress and job security) of failure to comply with the letter of the Framework. There was a fear that inspection could lead to high criticism and exposure. This arguably made people comply more than any law could have done.

Looking over what I have written I can see several themes, some of which seem to be more or less lifelong beliefs, whilst others, though just as deeply held, are more recently learnt. One thing I feel I have known all my literate life is that writing is tightly entwined with identity. Any writer exposes a part of his or her self to the world and resultant praise and criticism may be keenly felt. In a similar way, writing is an act of commitment: whatever one decides to write is a more or less fixed statement of some element of one's world view. For these reasons writing can be a cause of anxiety, but may equally be a source of pleasure, especially when it is a vehicle for one's enthusiasms. Writing about a subject one knows thoroughly is usually much easier than trying to assemble a text on an unfamiliar subject. I believe that people learn best through undertaking an activity in an authentic context, rather

than being instructed. However, I also believe that the right amount of teaching at the right time can have enormous benefits.

The research questions

The underlying research questions of this study, as set out at the beginning of this chapter are quite simple, namely:

- What influences shape the professional identities of writer-teachers?
- How do teachers who are writers draw on a writer identity in their teaching?

As representatives of wide-ranging areas of enquiry, these simple questions naturally imply other, more detailed questions, some of which are considered now.

Questions of identity

Through asking participants to relate personal memories of writing and teaching throughout their lifetime, the interviews explore a wide range of experiences with the potential to build and impact on their identity as writers and teachers. What, for example is the relative importance of formal experiences, such as schooling and initial teacher education (ITE) whose avowed intention is to form particular identities, and less formal experiences such as reading and writing with one's parents or children? Within both kinds of context, what role is played by social and cultural factors? Is personal agency an important factor: to what extent is identity something which participants have forged for themselves and how far is their identity the result of influences over which they have no control? Do all participants report critical incidents and how important are they to those who do? Is it the case, as a focus on the role of life experience in forming identities might suggest, that early experiences

construct relatively fixed later identities, or is identity something which is in a more or less continuous state of change or development?

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the study assumes a role for narrative in the construction of identity and the way in which this is used by individual participants to present and position themselves will be an important issue to address.

Questions of identity and literacy

Writing is important in the lives of all the participants in this study; most of them (and all the participants in the substantive phase) consider themselves to be writers. 'Writer' is a term with a wide variety of meanings, but what exactly does it mean to have a writer identity? Can the term apply to anybody who is capable of composing a text of any kind, or does it require some kind of special attributes or habits? If there are different kinds of writer, do they conceptualise the act and function of writing in different ways?

In a society in which literacy is ever present, and consciously acquired at a very young age, how intrinsic to personal identity is the ability to write? Is becoming literate simply a matter of acquiring skills or does it entail the adoption of literate ways of behaving, and understanding, in the context of wider culture? Since writing is often seen as a lonely pursuit and writers as solitary figures, how far can the contribution made to a writer's identity by other individuals be discerned?

Questions of writing and pedagogy

As already noted, primary teachers are generalists and relatively few have any kind of writing specialism, so it is clearly not the case that teachers *must* be writers in order to teach writing. But are there ways in which being a writer enables a teacher to teach writing differently or more effectively?

If being a writer does benefit teaching, how does it do so? Is it a matter of the teacher being able to externalise and make explicit what writers do, or simply one of (however subtly) visibly 'being a writer'. To what extent is teaching writing about 'teaching lessons' and to what extent about creating a social and cultural environment for learning, and what role does being a writer have in either of these? In this context, what is the relative importance of cognitive and affective factors and how does teaching as a writer fit with the various established writing pedagogies?

The notion of having a 'real' writer for a teacher raises questions of authenticity. How significant is it for learners to see their teacher as a committed writer and also to see their own writing as in some way 'real' or authentic? And is this authenticity something that can to any extent be faked? Alternatively, are there compromises which writer-teachers need to make so that they can bring their writer identity into their teaching.

2

Narratives of writer-teacher identities

As noted in Chapter 1, this study explores the life experiences of a number of writers who also are, or have been, teachers of writing and seeks to address the questions, what influences shape the professional identities of writer-teachers, and in particular, how do teachers who are writers draw on a writer identity in their teaching?

Framing the questions in this way assumes an importance for identity, both in the ways in which teachers do their job and in the way they learnt to do their job. A focus on identity enables the research to examine not simply what teachers do, but also who they are and who they feel themselves to be. As I shall argue, below, however, a view of identity as rooted in action and context means that 'what teachers do' is not sidelined, but is central to 'who teachers are'.

When a teacher who is also a writer engages with learners they may enact their writer identity in a whole range of ways. They may, for example, decide to try to incorporate as much of what they know about writing explicitly into their teaching, in the hope that their pupils will want to emulate in detail the practices of somebody they consider an expert writer. On the other hand they might consider writing to be an entirely separate part of their life, not to be shared with the children they teach, but nonetheless bring writerly judgements to bear when they are reading and responding to children's work; most are likely to do something between these extreme positions.

As will be explained in Chapter 3, such matters of identity will be explored through the kind of open interviews which enable participants to relate their relevant experience in as much detail as they choose; this means that much of what they say is in the form of narratives. It seems somewhat fitting that participants, most of whom are 'storytellers' in one way or another should have the opportunity to explain who they are in narrative form. A narrative methodology also serves the need to view events in their social and cultural context and to examine participants' agency in respect of their learning, teaching and writing. Furthermore, as will be discussed in this chapter, narrative has been seen by many to play a key role in the presentation and formation of identity.

Teaching and writing

Teachers as writers

The vocations of writing and teaching have long been closely associated, with many well-known and respected authors (including, according to some, Shakespeare himself (Richardson, 2013)) having at some time earned their living as teachers. While their craft

may have encroached on their classrooms in a variety of ways, serious interest in the educational potential of teachers who are also writers seems only to have arisen alongside the process writing movement in the 1980s (*e.g.* Graves, 1983; Murray, 1991; Blau, 1988; Frank, 2001), though recognition of the idea has been traced back to the mid 1960s (Smith and Wrigley, 2012). That it took so long to appreciate this potential asset should perhaps not be surprising, as even amongst specialist English teachers in the UK, most do not see themselves as writers (Peel, Patterson and Gerlach, 2000), while an Australian study found that both reading and the influence of an inspirational English teacher are much more likely reasons for people to choose to teach English than an interest in writing; in fact 'Few English teachers are simultaneously 'writers' in any sustained, pleasurable or publicly successful ways.' (Gannon and Davies, 2007, p.87)

Another possible reason for teachers being unwilling to engage with authorship is the complex and potentially stressful nature of the process of composition (Street and Stang, 2008) the perception of which may well be reinforced by personal school experiences,. The fact that teachers' lives are very busy (Street and Stang, 2008; Jost, 1990) and that curricula are prescriptive and demanding are other reasons which have been advanced. Reluctance to use writing with students has also been ascribed to a lack of relevant professional training (Street and Stang, 2009). Moreover, it is commonly believed, even among teachers, that the ability to write well is 'innate' and therefore may well be impossible to develop, however much time is given to it (C.Street, 2003). In the words of one American teacher, 'We are teachers by choice, after all, and not professional writers.' (Jost, 1990, p.66). It follows from this that teachers in both stages of this study are unusual both in their commitment to writing and for the most part in consciously bringing aspects of their writing into their practice.

This is not of course to say that the 'non-writing' majority of teachers are incapable of teaching writing, but it is clear that they must do so from the perspective of individuals who know *about* writing and who are able to employ teaching strategies which result in their students writing and producing texts of their own. However, when they teach writing, they are acting as teachers, not writers.

Research into teacher writers

Much of the research published on the effect of writer-teachers has been linked to the US's National Writing Project (NWP), and much of that has explored the project in terms of its professional networks and organisation rather than pedagogy or its consequences (Whitney, 2009). Studies which attend to teaching often do so through the medium of personal accounts and reflections on teachers' experience of the project. Regular evaluations, which include annual project reports and more recent large-scale quantitative and experimental studies identify numerous beneficial outcomes in terms of both changes to pedagogy and student outcomes, but their nature makes it impossible to attribute any of these things to any particular characteristic of the project (Andrews, 2008). The supposed value of having teachers who are writers has 'rarely been empirically studied', according to one group of researchers, but their quantitative study does find some evidence of a connection between student progress and teachers' writing lives (Whyte et al., 2007, p.8).

Initial teacher education has been a relatively productive site of enquiry, with opportunities to focus on students' writing histories, attitudes, views about writing and teaching writing and experience of writing both at their own level and as part of their classroom practice (*e.g* Domaille and Edwards, 2006; Luce-Kapler et al., 2001; Norman and Spencer, 2005). Similar

opportunities have been taken in a range of CPD programmes in addition to the NWP, while other studies have focused on exemplary teachers (Frank, 2001; Brooks, 2007).

Much of this research has been qualitative, in part because of the dominance of the NWP, whose philosophy and practical strategies lend themselves to practitioner research (Blau, 1988) and the writing of reflective personal accounts (*e.g.* Street, 1998). Other research has used various combinations of ethnographic methodologies such as interviews (Street, 2003), video-stimulated review (Cremin and Baker, 2010) journals (Wood and Lieberman, 2000; C.Street, 2003) and autobiographical writing (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009), questionnaires, electronic surveys (Street and Stang, 2008), classroom observations (Cremin and Baker, 2010), video and participant observations (Frank, 2001).

Very recently a small number of studies which focus on teachers who are writers from an identity perspective have been published (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009; Cremin and Baker, 2010), each deals with a relatively small group of teachers who, in the case of each study, have taken part in an ITE or CPD programme led by the researchers themselves.

Given England's recent history of education policies and curricula designed to minimise the agency of teachers and therefore the role identities are permitted to play in their classroom practice, the country might appear to be an attractive context in which to investigate writer-teacher identities, but only one such study, itself involving just two teachers, currently exists (Cremin and Baker, 2010).

The US study (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009), has much in common with the present one, analysing, as it does, data from an autobiographical component and interviews in terms of the overlapping features of identity, performance and narrative. Like many such studies, it draws its participants from a single CPD programme, though the methodology selects a widely differing, if small (four) group of teachers for its final analysis.

A common characteristic of many of the CPD and ITE programmes studied (with or without an identity focus) is that the teachers and students involved often do not see themselves as writers at the outset, but are inducted into a writer identity by the programme itself. Given, additionally, the low proportion of UK teachers who give time to writing (Peel et al., 2000), the present study is unusual in that overwhelmingly its participants are established writers with teaching experience or teachers with a conscious and evidenced commitment to writing. It is also unusual amongst small-scale studies in that participants have not had the shared experience of membership of a particular CPD or ITE programme and so do not have any shared experience other than that of being teachers who write.

Why should teachers be writers?

The fact that most teachers of writing are not themselves writers begs the question why it should be thought beneficial that they might be. The idea has sufficient appeal in the world of education for there to have been a numerous groups and projects established to encourage teachers to write. The US's *National Writing Project*, which began as the Bay Area Writing Project in 1974, and which in its continuous history has extended to the point where it is now active in every state of the USA (NWP, 2014), is probably the best known and largest of these. Although known and researched as much for its bottom-up model of

teacher development as for its pedagogy, the importance of teachers writing is one of its core principles:

'That teachers of writing must write: that their authority as teachers of writing must be grounded on their own personal experience as writers-as persons who know first hand the struggles and satisfactions of the writer's task.'

(Blau 1988, p.31)

Numerous other, smaller projects have been initiated often by academics working in the field of education (Dix and Cawkwell, 2011; Smith and Wrigley, 2012; Ings, 2009). In England, the national government initiative 'Teachers and TAs as writers' (HCTS, 2014), while following quite a different model from the projects cited here, is nonetheless predicated on a view that teachers who have personal experience of writing teach writing better.

This supposition, that teachers who are themselves experienced writers will in some way be better equipped to teach others to write (Yeo, 2007; Watts, 2009), perhaps because of the particular 'orientations' towards writing which they adopt (Whitney and Friedrich, 2013, p.6) does not seem unreasonable, especially when the teachers in question have taken the time to reflect on the process of writing (Grainger, 2005).

Although the NWP 'endorse[s] no theory or particular set of instructional practices' (Blau, 1988, p.30), in this principle it aligns with the process writing movement, where teaching and writing have been described as 'twin crafts' (Graves, 1983, p3). Uniquely within this paradigm, the teacher's capacities as a writer are seen as an important part of their teaching role, with teaching and writing not simply twins, but entwined. From the perspective of the NWP's bottom-up, practitioner-centred professional development model, teacher's understanding of both writing and pedagogic practice have much in common, with both

texts and teaching 'always under construction and also always in need of revision' (Wood and Lieberman, 2000). Teachers are seen both as 'authors' and as 'authorities in the teaching of writing' (Blau and Sperling, 1999, p.282). Reasons for insisting that teachers be writers include the ideas that a sense of competence in teaching writing depends on their being comfortable and confident in their own ability to write (C.Street, 2003), that teachers should be prepared to do what they ask their students to do (Street and Stang, 2009) and that only through experiencing the writing process will they fully understand it (Street, 1998). The experience of writing about writing and writing pedagogy may be a powerful way of transforming teachers' understanding (Blau, 1988; 1993). Studies provide some evidence that teachers feel better prepared and more comfortable in giving guidance to students (Street and Stang, 2009), have a more positive attitude towards writing and feel that their writing pedagogy has changed significantly (Whitney, 2008) when they have participated in a writing programme. This kind of change has been linked to an increase in teachers' self-efficacy (Dix and Cawkwell, 2011). As might be expected, given the NWP's *modus operandi*, many of these strategies appear to relate to a scenario in which experienced teachers are introduced to writing with the aim of making an impact on their practice.

On a practical level, teachers who are fellow writers (experienced and neophyte alike) may respond empathetically to writers in difficulties (Gleeson and Prain, 1996), be able to suggest credible (because tried) solutions to problems encountered in the course of composition (Watts, 2009), and enhance children's capacity to tackle future writing challenges by seeking their help with their own drafts in progress (Brooks, 2007). In this way, writer-teachers are able to act as collaborators with young writers, seeking original solutions together.

On the other hand, a few studies have concluded that there are no benefits arising from teachers' being writers. This research focuses on small and varied groups of teachers, some of whom are avowedly *not* writers and some of whom choose not to deliberately exploit the writer identity they have in their classrooms (Gleeson and Prain, 1996; Brooks, 2007).

The principle that teachers need to be writers has often been interpreted to mean that they should engage in 'personal' or 'creative' writing, 'essays and fiction and poetry: the kinds of writing we assign our students' (Jost, 1990) and the 'artistic' nature of writing has been cited as the very reason that it is important for teachers to engage in it (Grainger, 2005). One NWP teacher makes a distinction between mere 'writers' (who write) and 'authors', who write books, by transforming and combining story ideas to create something personal and new (Frank, 2001). A study of nearly 60 ITE students found an overwhelming preference for 'personal/creative' writing over other genres (Norman and Spencer, 2005). This kind of writing has been incorporated into initial teacher education (*e.g.* Domaille and Edwards, 2006; Luce-Kapler, 2001; Norman and Spencer, 2005) and CPD programmes (*e.g.* Ings, 2009).

However, the value of writing in other genres has also been advocated (Whitney, 2009; Paley, 1989). Journal writing is used frequently in ITE and CPD (Wood and Lieberman, 2000) and in the NWP's Summer Institutes teachers engage in both personal and professional writing (Whitney, 2008; Andrews, 2008). Professional writing for publication has been perceived to be as complex, demanding and audience-focused as fiction writing (D'Alessandro et al., 1992), while the nature of professional reflective writing can overlap with that of narrative (Paley 1989). It has also been argued that the distinction between personal and professional writing is artificial and stressful for teachers (Whitney, 2009). Because teachers may write for a variety of purposes and in a variety of ways each of which may have different implications for their practice, the category 'writer-teacher' is a complex

one (Gleeson and Prain, 1996). Teachers interviewed in the pilot phase of this study were writers in a very wide range of ways, from published authors to diarists and letter writers. Teachers in the final, substantive phase are, with one (unexpected) exception, writers (including professional writers) with substantial experience of crafting texts to publication standard, in a range of genres. The ways in which different writer-teachers find individual ways of relating their writing and teaching selves, in most cases to arrive at a personal pedagogy of writing is a theme pursued throughout all the interviews.

Support for adult writers

Most of this section focuses on different ways of doing writing in school. However, at least as important to the study are the ways in which each writer-teacher has, through life, built a writer identity. Each life is individual, but a number of topics emerge several times from the interviews, one of which is active membership of some kind of writing group; some of these groups are expressly for teachers, while others are not.

Writing groups have frequently been used as a form of teacher development: peer support groups 'where risk taking and friendly, honest feedback are valued' (Augsburger, 1998) exist in both ITE and CPD contexts (Luce-Kapler, 2001; Augsburger, 1998) and supportive collaboration has been observed to arise more or less spontaneously within workshops involving teachers and ITE students (Domaille and Edwards, 2006). Many of the writing group initiatives for teachers which have appeared in England over the last two or three decades have on the whole fostered craft knowledge rather than writing as a process that informs thinking and learning (Smith and Wrigley, 2012), tending to prepare teachers for the task of demonstrating their craft without necessarily requiring the engagement that underlies a strong personal writing identity.

Many CPD and ITE programmes for writing teachers require participants to write reflectively on their past writing history (Street and Stang, 2008; Norman and Spencer, 2005; Whitney, 2008). One reason for this is to allow those teaching the group to tailor their teaching to the experience of those taking part, another that confidence in one's own writing history boosts self-efficacy (Street and Stang, 2008). Personal experiences of writing and learning to write can be expected to have shaped individuals' understanding of and attitudes toward and beliefs about writing, writing development and writing pedagogy and if these attitudes and beliefs, whether they be idiosyncratic or arise from a wider community, are not examined then the individual concerned may not be receptive to ideas which are unfamiliar and perhaps conflicting (Norman and Spencer, 2005).

Experiences of learning to write are also likely to affect an individual's attitude to teaching, they may be 'determinants of how teachers think and what they do' (C.Street, 2003, p.35)

In the USA, mutually supportive writing groups at residential summer schools are a key feature of the NWP (Andrews, 2008). Regular writing and the sharing of work in progress over a period of some three to five weeks fosters writing within a community of practice, with more experienced writers inducting their peers into the community through constructive response and comment. Peer group support has been identified as one of a number of NWP embedded practices which teachers may choose to use in their own classrooms as part of their writing culture (Dix and Cawkwell, 2011). As well as having the relatively long-term experience of being a writer, teachers also experience a culture conducive to writing which is likely to inform their future pedagogy. The sustained involvement in writing at summer schools has been associated with 'dramatic professional development experiences' and 'transformative change of teachers understanding through

simultaneous engagement of personal and professional identities' (Whitney, 2008, p.178), while the continuing affiliation which is an essential element of the project has been linked to a change in 'how teachers think about their professional identities and responsibilities and, therefore, how they go about their work' (Wood and Lieberman, 2000, p.257).

The NWP model has been emulated elsewhere in the world on a smaller scale (*e.g.* Dix and Cawkwell, 2011), and although a proposal for a full scale model in England (Andrews, 2008) failed to gain government funding and support, a model based on writers' groups organised at grass roots level was established in 2009 (Smith and Wrigley, 2012).

A common feature of all these groups is that while they give opportunities to write, they all involve some conceptual link to the participants' classrooms. NWP groups, which clearly change many teachers' self perception as writers fundamentally have been described as 'communities committed to sustained inquiry, dialogue, and risk-taking – *all for the sake of children's learning*' (Wood and Lieberman, 2000, p. 271) (my emphasis). Whether initiated by a national project or personal motivation, an assumption of such groups is that the development and consolidation of a personal writer identity makes the teachers concerned better at teaching writing. In groups (such as the NWP summer schools) which emphasise social practices it seems likely that learning will be improved by the bringing of teachers' writer identity into their classrooms.

However, wanting to be a better teacher is not the only reason for joining a writers' group. There is (in the UK at least) a thriving network of groups for writers who are not necessarily

teachers (e.g. Meetups, 2014), many university courses at master's level and numerous residential creative writing courses.

Although teachers may be well represented in these groups, their focus is on the creation of texts and the development of participants themselves as writers. However, while a writing group may not knowingly cater for teachers, teachers in writing groups cannot leave their teacher identity at the door and lessons learnt may be 'readily transferable' to the classroom (Street, 1998).

Writing: autonomous or socially constructed?

In many English speaking countries, writing teaching in primary schools has traditionally been strongly focussed on the teacher as authority, instructor and sole audience, the teaching of discrete skills, such as spelling and planning and the suppression of errors. Interaction, especially between learners, has not been encouraged (Smith and Elley, 1998). Implicit in such an approach is the idea that writing and learning to write can be characterised in purely cognitive terms, a matter of manipulating symbols and orchestrating a complex variety of elements (Wray and Medwell, 2006). More recent, psychologically-based models of writing cast the student writer in a more agentic, problem-solving role than in the traditional classroom, and acknowledge some role for social context in terms of both the 'task environment' (Flower and Hayes, 1980) and the text's eventual audience, but persist in the characterisation of the writing task as a matter of orchestrating a number of cognitive processes (Flower and Hayes, 1980; Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987), an endeavour to be undertaken, albeit with some teacher support, by the individual learner. Indeed, one model (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987) identifies the need to compose without the benefit

of a conversational partner as a key feature of writing which the young writer needs to accommodate (Smith and Elley, 1998).

This conceptualisation of literacy and literacy learning as being a matter of individuals acquiring 'asocial' cognitive skills which are 'dislodged from their socio-cultural moorings in human relationships and communities of practice' (Richardson, 1998, p.116) has been called an 'autonomous' model (Street, 1984). Such a perspective takes little or no account of the role played by both immediate social and cultural context on how a writer composes or the institutionalised nature of many forms of writing (Schultz and Fecho, 2000). Through the years, the autonomous model has enjoyed credence with teachers, school leaders, politicians and teachers. The belief 'that writing consists of applying knowledge of a set of linguistic patterns and rules for sound-symbol relationships and sentence construction' has underlain 'a great deal of policy and practice in literacy education' (Ivanič, 2004, p.227) both in England and in other English speaking countries.

From this perspective it is, of course, possible to argue that teachers do not themselves need to be writers, and indeed, as already noted, in practice the majority have not been. The knowledge needed to teach spelling and other skills, to discourage errors and to set up a positive task environment can all be learnt from other teachers and perhaps also from personal experience of being a classroom learner. However, even if writing is viewed as a freestanding cognitive process to be developed, a set of skills to be transferred from teacher to individual learner regardless of context or situation (Richardson, 1998) then it seems more than likely that a teacher who personally possesses those skills -both at the level of knowing how texts and sentences are structured and words spelt and also at the level of familiarity with practical strategies related to the psychological processes of composing- will be better equipped to explain and impart them to young learners.

The standpoint of this study is that an activity so socially and culturally rooted as writing cannot be understood outside of its social and cultural context. It therefore takes the sociocultural, view that literacy is always embedded within social and cultural interactions (Macleod, 2004) so that it is something that happens in a unique way within each 'literacy event' and that habitual ways of doing literacy constitute 'literacy practices' (Street, 2003), which while being situated within their immediate physical, social and cultural context are also constructed by a wider political and ideological context (Macleod, 2004). Proponents of a social literacies perspective take the view that any engagement with literacy is a social act since,

'The ways in which teachers or facilitators and their students interact is already a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy being learned and the ideas about literacy held by the participants'

(B. Street, 2003, p.78)

Within a sociocultural perspective, literacy is defined as 'the learning and use of symbols [...] mediated by and constituted in social systems and cultural practices' (Moje et al., 2008, p. 109). From this perspective, literacy is understood 'principally as a form of social participation and literacy learning principally as a form of socialisation' (Brandt and Clinton, 2002, p.342).

Ethnographic research has shown the bearing children's conception of the social context of literacy has on their ability to adopt the literacy practices of school (Heath, 1983) and taking such factors into account means accepting that children's developing control of the symbolic system of literacy is not a simple matter of solving a cognitive puzzle but also, simultaneously, 'the child's increasingly active participation in a cultural dialogue' (Dyson, 1990, p.106) and the 'negotiation of social worlds' (Schultz and Fecho, 2000). A social contextual view of writing sees the world as 'socially constructed, where knowledge is in flux

and issues are complicated by deep structures of multiply-perceived meaning' (Schultz and Fecho, p.51). As the learner strives to order personal thoughts in order to address others, the public nature of the linguistic signs means that they also represent aspects of societal order (Dyson, 1995).

Although the development of this body of theory originated only towards the end of the twentieth century (Whitney, 2008), the idea that literacy is a situated social practice has been described as 'something of an orthodoxy' in current literacy research (Brandt and Clinton, p337). Many of the participants in both phases of this study talk about social, cultural and political factors in their teaching, ranging from classroom organisation and ways of talking with children to national policies which have sometimes had a profound effect on a teacher's career. A narrative methodology has been chosen for this study in part because the access it gives to this kind of essential information.

The concept of learning as a social practice, involving a growing relationship with a social group until one has the capacity to become a full member, has been developed as a theory of 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Viewed in this way, learning to write is not simply a matter of acquiring a set of behaviours, but rather of learning, through practice, to behave in ways observed in others within a community; to become a writer, therefore, is to join a community of writers (C.Street, 2003; Dix and Cawkwell, 2011). Thus, the literacy practices of any given classroom have a direct bearing on the identity of both teacher and learners, since 'how we believe, how we interact, what we value, what we think, what we believe, what we say, what we read and so on are all part of our identity' (Macleod, 2004, p. 246).

Developments in theory and research that frame writing as socially and culturally situated and constructed have been closely linked to the proposition that it is important for writing teachers to be writers (Whitney, 2008). The practice of a writer-teacher has the potential to be grounded in her/his experiences as an author and therefore the social and cultural practices of authors. Teacher and learners are able to take part in the classroom's cultural dialogue from a shared perspective. Learners taught by writer-teachers are concerned with 'how writers talk, act, and think, as well as issues concerning the content and mechanics of writing' (Frank, 2001, p.469).

Writer-teachers have the potential to help children as they become writers. 'Instead of developing as writers who understand "writing" as spelling, editing, or grammar, these students use social and cultural practices that help them to develop identities as readers, writers, and speakers in a discourse of authors' (Frank, p.472).

By investigating both the life history and classroom literacy practices of writer-teachers, this research seeks to characterise teaching and learning in sociocultural terms and thereby illuminate the ways in which writing and teaching identities are brought together both synchronically and diachronically in the process of learning.

Learner and teacher agency

Agency has already been identified as an essential element in identity construction and it is equally central to the understanding of teaching and learning in sociocultural terms, since learners need to be able to construct and understand knowledge for themselves, rather than merely memorising it (Wood and Lieberman, 2000). Learner agency allows learners to take ownership of their learning (Cremin et al., 2006) and construct personal identities through

learning (Van Sluys, 2004). Learning to write involves the learning of non-negotiable conventions, but also the ability to express one's own ideas in one's own way and use writing for one's own purposes (Fisher, 2006). For teachers whose teaching experience is severely circumscribed by national policy, as is the case for several in this study, this is a tension which must be negotiated carefully.

This study takes the view that the literacy culture of the classroom is constructed by teachers and children as they construct new literacy identities outside their normal comfort zone. In such a context, the agency to adopt risky new identities is central to learning. Within a paradigm in which teaching and learning are seen as socially and culturally situated and constructed, teachers are 'authors and authorities in the teaching of writing' (Whitney, 2008, p. 282) since their understanding of writing is grounded in 'what authors do as they write' rather than in the orthodoxies of writing pedagogy. (Frank, 2001, p.469). Three identified principles, of 'authorship', 'authority' and 'authorization' entail agency in terms of the use of personal knowledge and experience to construct knowledge (Wood and Lieberman, 2000, pp. 261-2).

Within the NWP, professional development activities for teachers are underpinned by a view that teaching requires creativity and agency and the Project supports teacher agency by stressing the value of individual voices, styles, opinions and perspective. 'With stronger professional voices and collegial relationships, NWP teachers awaken to a sense of agency.' (Wood and Lieberman, 2000, p.264). Teachers familiar with this agentic view of their own learning are empowered to apply its principles in their own classrooms (Wood and Lieberman, 2000). To a similar end, the groups described by Smith and Wrigley support and legitimise individuals' literacy practices and expect that teachers in turn will respect the

choices of the children they teach (Smith and Wrigley, 2012). 'Myra' (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009) attributes her ability to model writing to her class to a newly discovered sense of voice in her own writing.

The classroom context

Although some schools of writing pedagogy have deliberately capitalised on the social nature of literacy learning, whatever approach is overtly adopted, every classroom is a social and cultural context from which learners will learn particular ways of behaving in a literate manner. Literacy development cannot be understood without reference to 'the local culture of the classroom', which constitutes the environment in which literacy develops (Schultz and Fecho, 2000, p.56). Classrooms where the agency or creativity of learners is explicitly valued have been seen as a 'community of writers' (Cremin and Myhill, 2011; Graves, 1983; Augsburger, 1998; Lensmire, 1994) and as a creative environment in which the teacher is an active participant (Grainger et al., 2007). McKinney and Giorgis (2009) cite research associated with process writing as providing numerous examples of classroom environments where students identify themselves as writers in the way in which they talk about writing in terms of craft and process. They conclude that such classrooms further children's proficiency as they foster their identities as writers.

Although, as already noted, the NWP does not explicitly espouse any particular theoretical perspective, (Blau, 1988) the approach of Project teachers typically supports socially contextualised learning both through the teacher's identity as a committed writer and through a number of classroom routines or 'embedded practices'. These include various strategies to enable peer group response to developing or completed drafts (Dix and Cawkwell, 2011), conferencing and modelling (Fletcher and Portalupi, 2001). All of these practices involve teachers and children sharing their writing and writing practice with

another individual, a group or the whole class. The practice of sharing a draft in progress has been linked to a theoretical perspective originated by Vygotsky as, 'children receive and then internalise the feedback from their social environment to further their understanding of how to write for a real audience' (Smith and Elley, 1998, p.43). Moreover, both author and audience may benefit from such exchanges, since there is 'always something to learn from others' responses to your ideas and always some way to build on someone else's ideas' (Wood and Lieberman, 2000, p.258). A teacher may use her/his experience as an author to support this kind of sharing by encouraging intertextuality (linking texts with the texts of others) and intercontextuality (creating shared texts for others to use as resources) (Frank 2001). In such a classroom, all learners have both a teaching and a learning role, as members of the community of practice. The pattern of constructive response displayed by classmates has been described as students collaboratively apprenticing their peers into authorship (Dix and Cawkwell, 2011).

The degree of learner agency in play is of course a significant factor in the nature of the classroom as a social and cultural environment. For the teacher's part, through acting in a creative way, characterised by spontaneity and flexibility, s/he is "arguably [...] in a stronger position to develop the creative voice of the child" (Cremin, 2006). Most of the teachers interviewed for this study have needed to find ways of reconciling their personal, insider understanding of the act of writing with pedagogical prescriptions which may conflict with that understanding. None of them are dogmatically committed to any particular school of writing pedagogy, but most are concerned to find ways of sharing their writing self with the children they teach and many speak of how this may help children to write creatively.

Conducting life in literate ways

In classrooms where learners have the agency to choose how they write and learn they are free to adopt (or not) the writing behaviours of their teachers. Significant benefits have been claimed to arise from teachers' simply allowing pupils to see them writing, both while the children write themselves (Graves, 1983) and as part of their daily routine (Bearne, 1998). This allows teachers to show children that writing is essential to their identity, something they do as part of their own lives, so that children will see writing as something they can do themselves, and, furthermore, see 'writer' as a role they are able to take on: 'teachers must show the advantages that membership in the club of writers offers and ensure children can join' (Smith, 1988, p.26). It has been argued that an important aspect of the role of the writing teacher is 'the act of living one's life under the gaze of another', so that if a teacher is visibly an active writer, s/he will induct students to 'conduct their own lives in literate ways' (Kaufman, 2002, p.56). One way for teachers to do this is to share their own stories, poems and other texts written from choice, outside the classroom (C.Street, 2003). Teachers may need to earn the trust of learners by revealing something of themselves and their history in the context of the 'journey' they are asking them to embark upon (Street and Stang, 2008) and it has been argued that they will be motivated to write if teachers are prepared to share affective aspects of their writing experience -both the pain and joy- (Gleeson and Prain, 1996) and their passion for writing (C.Street 2003), whereas they are likely to be demotivated from performing an activity which their teacher is not willing to do; they should be perceived as a fellow writer (Augsburger, 1998). Sharing the agony may be of particular value, since, as many writers have acknowledged, writing is an activity which can often leave the writer feeling vulnerable and anxious (Gannon and Davies, 2007; Cremin, 2006; Luce-Kapler 2001). It may be that some teachers need to renew their experience of writing in order to appreciate how difficult children can find it (Augsburger, 1998). It is worth

noting that for children to be able to follow their teacher's example they need a significant degree of choice or agency in the writing they undertake. This is axiomatic within the process approach, but its importance is much less clear in the genre and skills paradigms which have formed the basis of the English curriculum in England certainly since 1998 (Beard, 1999). Indeed, it has been suggested that writing which has some personal value 'may have to be conducted outside the constraints of timetabled lessons and become part of the fabric of extra-curricula [*sic*] activities' (Domaille and Edwards, 2006, p.75).

Teachers and classes writing together

Lessons in which the teacher writes on a board, flipchart or electronic whiteboard as the class composes a text more or less collectively are referred to by the great majority of teachers in both phases of this research. The term 'modelling' has been used to describe such practice (*e.g.* Ings, 2009; Brooks, 2007) and this draws attention to an understanding that in this process the teacher offers something which learners are expected in some way to emulate. Teachers like the great majority of the English teachers in this study who have worked with the National Literacy Strategy or the Primary National Strategy (DfEE, 1998a; DfE, 2014), will be familiar with the term 'shared writing'. Within this body of practice, a distinction has been drawn between two kinds of activity: in *demonstration writing*, the teacher is author of the text in hand and offers both written words and thinking aloud to the class, who are attending but not actively contributing to the text; in *joint composition*, authorship is at least to some extent shared as children's suggestions are invited and may be incorporated into the text (Cremin and Baker, 2010).

The origins of NLS shared writing have been determined as being in the cognitive paradigm established by Flower and Hayes (1980) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) and also explicitly linked to a genre approach (Beard 1999). Here the aim is to develop a text through

modelling, above all, certain specified textual features. The procedure begins with the examination of (model) texts chosen to demonstrate the uses and features of the genre in question, followed by the teacher leading (while scribing) the class's first attempts to compose in that genre in a way which reinforces the target vocabulary and structures. In the final stage children are required to write independently, according to the structures now well-established (Beard 1999).

Composing in an unplanned way is of course more demanding than delivering a prepared performance and may involve disturbing levels of uncertainty (Whyte et al., 2007). There is evidence that this kind of shared writing is often not an authentically spontaneous experience in the testimony of teachers who, under pressure to demonstrate the required set of features in a constrained period of time prepare the text they are to compose in advance, so that the target words are reproduced to order, but the act of composition merely feigned (Grainger, 2005). Thus, they are acting a scripted role, rather than enacting a personally held identity. This is explicitly acknowledged in the case of 'Jennifer', a teacher who 'plans and models lessons to help students determine how an expert reader and writer functions' (Brooks, 2007, p.184) while the intentions of another teacher in the same study, 'Debbie' who models writing for her classes 'to show them how to put ideas together, start with capital letters, put proper punctuation....' (Brooks, 2007, P187) are even more sharply focussed on text features. A further threat to authenticity lies in the likelihood that students are aware of the artifice. In the words of one, 'We can always say to [the teacher] if the writing is very good that he probably did it at home first.' (Gleeson and Prain 1996, p.48). The NLS/PNS did not, of course, proscribe authentic writer behaviour on the part of teachers, but did require specific behaviours on the part of teachers without requiring them to have any foundation in authenticity (DfEE, 1998a, DfE, 2014).

It has been said of shared writing that it requires teachers 'to operate as expert writers' (Cremin, 2006, p.417) and this is indeed how they are likely to be perceived by children. In reality, however, what is being demonstrated is the draft rather than the drafting, and only on fleeting occasions (Cremin and Baker, 2010) the authentic behaviour and affective responses of writers as they tackle the problems of composition. Since all primary teachers, including the vast majority who are not writers, are expected to teach in this way, then at best, most are modelling how they *think* expert writers behave. Rather than offering children insights into the how writers write, the technique is most likely to represent an attempt simply to present samples of language, rather than writing strategies, to be copied in the 'independent writing' stage. Since the teacher is likely to repeat the same behaviours from day to day, and to reward children (with approval and confirmation of NC target achievement) when they produce the required structures, this approach is best characterised as behaviourist.

Beyond the confines of prescribed curricula, it has been argued that even a teacher who is a novice writer may use authentic composition effectively, modelling not just their best attempt at drafting but also processes of problem solving and learning similar to those experienced by their students (Graves 1983). However, the counterargument, that a teacher's ability to 'model good writing' is a 'necessary skill in the development of student writing' has also been made (Street and Stang, 2008, p.39). Even in the case of a novice writer-teacher, it would be overly romantic to see teacher and pupils as equals in their endeavour, but not so to see both parties as learners, both genuinely experiencing the process of composition, with all its joys and challenges and children enjoying a degree of agency unavailable in more prescriptive approaches.

If, as has been suggested, the NLS and its successor prescriptions, with their context-free, 'autonomous' model of language (Street, 1984), represent an attempt to devise a teacher-proof literacy curriculum (Poulson and Avramidis, 2003) then it is not concerned with a teacher's level of expertise. Similarly, they appear to turn their back on social factors, since any assumption that social background is a factor in school performance is rejected and the contribution of schooling emphasised. Parental involvement is seen exclusively in terms of support for NLS approaches and social factors largely considered as problems to be overcome (Beard 1999).

However, even within these curricular patterns it would be possible for a writer-teacher to model writing in an authentic way, bringing their own writer identity to the task of composing collaboratively an original text, so allowing learners too to engage their own writing identity. This process would involve all the pauses, indecisions, wrong choices, wholesale deletions and fresh starts characteristic of real world composition. It would also reveal the non-linear, recursive nature of text construction. As already noted, this is a difficult thing to do in lessons which must achieve specified learning outcomes in a specified time and which are expected to demonstrate 'pace'. Of course, it would be easier for an experienced and competent writer, and the extent to which the writer-teachers in this study feel able to achieve it is a topic explored in the interviews. The teachers in Cremin and Baker's classroom-based study claimed to be operating as writers only rarely (Cremin and Baker, 2010).

In the above discussion I have argued that the learning and teaching of writing are matters of identity, rather than simply the imparting and practice of skills. The next section turns to the question of what is meant by identity.

Identity

Until very recently, identity has been a neglected focus for research in the area of writing pedagogy research, with teachers' writing identities in relation to their practice having received 'scant attention' (Cremin and Baker, 2010) so that the existence of a link between a writer identity and pedagogy has been no more than an 'unexamined assumption' (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009). This seems strange, given the intimate relationship between writing and personal identity (Cazden, 2009).

Self and identity

If asked to summarise the content of the interview they gave, many of the participants in this study would probably say something like, 'I just talked about myself' and in simple terms, the study might be understood as an attempt to gather from its participants evidence of events and experiences which contributed to the development of the 'self' represented by the person talking.

The injunction 'just be yourself' implies that each of us possesses a core self or identity which is distinctive and constant, and underlies behaviours which may be less 'true' and therefore mask the 'true self'. According to this view, the task in hand might be seen as revealing, or reconstructing the 'true self' of each of the writer-teachers. Whilst a view of the self as monolithic, wholly internal and unchanging is, as I intend to show, untenable, personal belief in 'a singular authentic self', 'resolutely available as a beacon to guide us' remains 'the leading experiential project of our era' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000, p.96) and subjectivity remains an essential part of identity. Most people take an essential self as a

given (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000) and I certainly took it for granted that such an assumption would underlie much of what was said in the interviews for this study.

Although the two terms 'self' and 'identity' are often used interchangeably in everyday speech (and sometimes in academic considerations of the subject (*e.g.* Hall, 1996) the discussion in this thesis will mostly be conducted in terms of identity. The 'internalised process' of the personal sense of self and the 'situated performance' in respect of others have been proposed as parallel ways of seeing identity (Thorne 2004, p.5). Situated performance will often express membership of such personal, social and cultural categories as race, class and gender (Hall, 1990; Wortham, 2004). Whereas, 'identity' may, refer both to an individual's personal subjectivity and to, a the product of associated interactions and practices, 'self' generally refers only to the former. The inward and outward facing nature of identity has also been characterised as a matter of operating at two levels, 'the interpersonal (seeming) and the intrapersonal (feeling)' (Bartlett, 2007, p.35).

Psychological approaches often take the individual's perspective as a starting point in examining issues of identity and self (Leary and Tangney, 2003). The socio-cultural stance adopted by this study takes into account both personal and interactive factors.

Identity is constructed in relation to others

Definitions of identity that emphasise its social and cultural construction, for example those that draw upon sociocultural and critical theory, do not focus on individuals in isolation but allow a role for their relationship with 'people, institutions and practices' (Sarup, 1994, p. 102), since people actively adjust their behaviour to meet external demands (McAdams,

2001), meaning that identity is 'nurtured by a myriad of social affiliations' (Thorne, 2004, p. 364). The process of identification with such personal, social and cultural categories as race, class and gender (*e.g.* Hall 1990; Wortham, 2004), which may often be assigned via power relations (Holland and Leander, 2004) has been considered essential to identity construction. From the perspective of a critical, social and cultural construction of identity (Lewis et al., 2007) the ways in which the personal and wider social and cultural considerations interact in different contexts contribute significantly to the construction of identities.

Identity is actively constructed, fluid and dynamic

If identity arises, at least in part, out of interactions and usual life experience entails encountering a succession of others, then identity must be ever-changing. One theoretical framework designed to account for this does so in terms of the concept of 'figured worlds' (Holland et al., 1998), social and cultural environments in which the individual must construct, or 'figure' roles for her/himself and others. Through improvising actions the individual comes to figure their personal identity as well as those of others. Crucially, roles are not fixed, but constantly in the process of being created (Urrieta, 2007). The need to assert or negotiate one's position within activity in this way means that identity is not something that one *has*; rather it casts identity as an active pursuit, the 'doing of identity' (Moje and Luke, 2009, p.418), which takes place at the interface of individual, society and culture. That such a conceptualisation allows a role for personal agency is not to deny a role for culture, situation or other participants; indeed, identity may be as much about 'the "kind of person" one is recognised as "being"' (Gee, 2000, p.1) as the kind of person one feels oneself to be. (Though, of course, the latter will be influenced by the former.) Different identities may arise from their recognition by others, in or observing

interaction, rather than being a feature of the 'internal state' of the individual concerned (Gee, 2000).

Identification is thus 'never complete, always in process' (Hall, 1990, p222) and 'Something fluid and dynamic that is produced, generated, developed, or narrated over time'. (Moje and Luke, p.418)

Language and identity

Identity has also been portrayed as arising 'in and through language' (Sarup, 1996, p.47). In intrapersonal terms, language enables reflexivity so that an individual may achieve a sense of self through being 'an object to himself' [*sic*] (Mead 2009, p 65). Interpersonally, individuals engage in identity-forming situations and contrive to align or contrast themselves with others to a significant degree through the verbal claims they make about who they are (McCarthy & Moje, 2002, p.230). Social class and regional origins are strongly associated with individual ways of speaking (Crystal, 1994) and any utterance embodies a speaker's identity in so far as its value may be judged according to 'the value and meaning ascribed to the person who speaks' (Norton and Toohey, 2002). This is not to say that language merely represents identity: it is, more importantly, one medium through which identity is created (Sfard and Prusak 2005). One form of language which has been particularly associated with both the representation and creation of identity is narrative and the relationship between narrative and identity is discussed in some detail later in this chapter.

Participants in the present study give evidence of their interactions with family members, their own teachers, colleagues, other writers and many other significant parties. They also talk of the part played by written language, for example their past and present life

experiences of reading and writing (including learning to read and write), what they choose to read and official texts such as curriculum guidance and directives. They relate much of their experience in the form of narratives.

Literacy and identity

The participants in this study were asked to relate literacy experiences from throughout their lives, and as writers and teachers it is clear that most feel that their enthusiasm for reading and writing is a significant part of how they see themselves and how others see them.

Along with language and culture, from an early age perception of one's own literacy contributes significantly to one's sense of identity (McCarthy, 2001). For some children in McCarthy's study their positive sense of themselves as readers and writers played a major role in how they saw themselves, while for others, feeling themselves not to be successful in literacy was just as significant; in a literate society, consciously *not* being a reader or writer can be an important part of one's identity. The public nature of many of the literacy practices experienced by the children in McCarthy's study, both the institutional classification of children according to reading attainment and the less formally expressed opinions of peers, teachers, parents and others is a likely factor in the consolidation of these identities. Literacy also facilitated the expression of other aspects of identity (*e.g.* ethnicity) for some children. The existence of 'multiple literacies' (Bartlett, 2007, p.52), manifested according to social and cultural contexts and practices reflects the existence of multiple identities, an idea which will be discussed shortly.

Literacy learning may, therefore, be characterised as the adoption of a literate identity through inter- and intra-personal identity work and engagement with a whole range of cultural artefacts (including books, libraries, written and spoken words, digital media), with learners working to enter the figured world of “the educated person” (Bartlett, 2007, p.56) and participate effectively in the cultural practices of literacy. Through such identity work, an individual comes to function in terms of the systems and practices of literacy. The social negotiation necessary to this process is of both a ‘cognitive/strategic’ and ‘emotional/motivational’ nature (McCarthy 2001); put simply, the learner must solve the intellectual puzzle of how to become literate, but they must also want to join ‘the literacy club’ (Smith, 1988). If literacy is ‘a social process’ whose various technologies are ‘used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes’ (Street, 1984, p.97), within literate societies there are many aspects of literacy and literacy practice which a person may be aligned with or alienated from. The writer-teachers in this study are no exception to this principle.

Thus writing, specifically, has strong associations with issues of identity and selfhood, often keenly perceived by the writer. Many forms of writing, not only narrative, have the potential to help writers learn about themselves and the world they live in (Packwood and Messenheimer, 2003) and (as with other forms of language) the writer’s identity is revealed to a greater or lesser extent to the reader and may in itself lend value to a text.

‘Voice’, conceived as ‘the capacity to make oneself understood as a situated subject’ (Blommaert, 2005, p222) is a prime way in which identity is expressed through writing. Even in the ostensibly objective genre of academic writing, writers cannot avoid including elements arising not from their subject matter but from their personal hinterland (C.Street, 2003). Writers bring to their texts a variety of commitments based on their own

interests, values, beliefs and wider history (Ivanič 1998). In the context of writing in school, Graves (1983) calls this 'self-centred force' 'the source of power in children's writing' and his consideration of how this egotistical drive must be reconciled with a more 'decentred' view of one's writing recalls the dynamic between an introspective subjectivity and socially generated identities. Similarly, writers must adopt a *stance* (Street, 2009, p.6) which demonstrates both their personal integrity and their relationship to the subject matter. Rather than being an expression of a pre-existing identity, the act of writing may be creating a (wholly or partially) new identity (Hyland, 1999). This creation of a text out of various elements of identity has led to texts being characterised as 'an artefact of identities' (Rowse and Pahl, 2007, p.392) which owe as much to the unconscious contributions of personal history and social practices as they do to the conscious choices made by the author in the act of composition. Thus, the complexity of personal identity is mirrored by the complexity of texts (Rowse and Pahl, 2007).

Accepting or rejecting identities: positioning

As already noted, the 'doing of identity' may be seen as a never-ending process of identification -solidarity or allegiance arising from the recognition of shared characteristics with other individuals, local social and cultural groups or wider personal, social and cultural categories such as race, class and gender, in a way which reflects the power relations of society (Hall 1996; Wortham, 2004; Holland and Leander, 2004). Since many social and cultural groups exist in opposition to other groups (e.g. to be a man is to not be a woman), identities may also be constructed 'through difference', that is to say in relation to the (often more powerful) group with which an individual does not identify (Hall, 1990).

The process through which 'individuals dynamically position themselves both toward and against others and thereby construct their identities' (Thorne, 2004, p.5) has become known

as *positioning*. Positioning may take place between individuals and groups through a variety of instruments and means, including 'discourse, spatial arrangement, text, film, or other media' (Holland and Leander, 2004). In the course of a single day, most people will position themselves variously, sometimes conflictingly, in relation to numerous others (Moje and Luke, 2009). Autobiographical narrative (written or spoken) characteristically supports identity construction by allowing the narrator to adopt particular positions in relation to both listeners and other characters in the narrative (Wortham, 2001). Positioning statements provide interesting data in the interviews for this study.

Positioning may be seen as the result of interpellation (Althusser, 1971) or some other kind of offer or invitation to take up a particular social position (Moje and Luke, 2009). In Althusser's model, ideology interpellates individual subjects by 'hailing' them as a police officer might hail a passing citizen. The individual's compliant response casts her/him as a subject of the ideology, which not only hails but also relies on that recognition. If, however, the individual refuses to accept the identity offered in this way, that refusal is also an act of identity formation, in a reciprocal 'microproduction' of both a social position and 'a self who inhabits and comes to personify it' (Holland and Leander, 2004, p.128). Positioning in many contexts is undertaken in respect of multiple other parties (Cremin and Baker, 2010); to take Althusser's famous example, the police officer must not only position her/himself in relation to the person in the street but also to superior officers, the judiciary and many other parties. Teachers of any subject will recognise the concept of interpellation in respect of many highly powerful and some less powerful parties such as colleagues, pupils, school management, OFSTED, governors, political leaders, the press and parents.

Positioning may be seen as actively positioning oneself in respect of others, or passively being positioned by others, but whatever the perspective there is a significant degree of

reciprocity, a negotiation between the parties. Positions may be taken personally or generically (e.g. 'the position of women') and the accumulation of positions over a period can result in strongly felt and complex elements of identity (Satterfield, 2004). As a process, positioning may be mediated by culture and cultural artefacts 'constructing and producing historically specific persons as complicated social, cultural, and psychological beings' (Holland and Leander, 2004, p.137).

Identity is multiple

Continuing interaction implies the need to continually shift one's position to produce new subjectivities (Moje and Luke, 2009). Moreover, thanks to the complexity of most people's lives, which require them to operate in different domains of activity with a variety of people and institutions, each individual can be expected to demonstrate a number of recognisable identities. At its simplest level, this might mean that a person 'is' different at home from 'how she or he "is" at work' (Mishler, 1999). If people vary from moment to moment according to context and interactions then their identities are 'multiple and always in flux' (Moje and Luke, 2009, p.418). Over time the effects of personal interactions do not simply accumulate but relate to and combine with each other to achieve a greater complexity (Holland and Leander, 2004).

Such accumulation has been explained in terms of sedimentation (Rowse and Pahl, 2007; Holland and Leander, 2004), which recalls the way in which rocks may be formed from the slow accretion of a variety of material. The idea, which has been described as 'history-in-person', is applied where the material of self is 'washed out, sifted, transformed from its original configuration and settled or congealed into a new shape' (Holland and Leander,

2004, p.132), for example within texts and literacy practices. In this sense, texts may embody the complex identities of their writers (Rowse and Pahl, 2007).

Another metaphor, that of 'lamination' (Bendix and Brenneis, 2005) focuses more specifically on identity itself as created through the overlaying of the consequences of 'recurrent, foregrounded and culturally salient phenomena' (Bendix and Brenneis, 2005, p. 145). The inspiration for this conception is the construction of musical instruments, whose laminated materials enable clearer, brighter sounds, though lamination itself also may have the physical effect of stabilising or strengthening (Holland and Leander, 2004), as well as allowing diverse elements to come together as a single material. The metaphor accommodates both 'person-centred processes' and 'social forces' (Holland and Leander, 2004).

As metaphors, both 'sedimentation' and 'lamination' imply a relatively calm and measured process resulting in a stable state, albeit one open to further accretion of layers. The process of reconciling conflicting identities may, however, be a turbulent and troubling one and this aspect of identity construction is perhaps better expressed in terms of borderland discourse (Alsup, 2006). Alsup characterises the situation of ITE students, who are working to construct a teacher identity which may bear little relation to other identities they hold as being comparable to that of people living on national or cultural borders. In this case they 'find themselves living at the intersection of multiple world and multiple ways of knowing'. Their goal, in developing new identities is not to erase these borders but to find ways of existing in the space between them, a space 'in which to experience a richer, fuller and more complex understanding of self and other' (Alsup, 2006, p.15). In constructing identity, the individual must not only integrate (synchronically) differing roles and relationships experienced at a

given point or period of time but also (diachronically) with past, identity-constructing experiences (McAdams, 2001). Although the process described by Alsup allows an individual to retain elements of the past while developing a new present, in the case of preservice teachers at least, there is a sense in which, through finally becoming a teacher s/he does achieve a goal or reach a destination, constructing identity diachronically. Many of the teachers in this study talk about their diachronic acquisition of new identities, but most also relate synchronic conflicts and oppositions in respect of their writing and teaching identities. Identity construction is not simply a matter of crossing borders, but sometimes a matter of learning how to live in the borderlands. Of particular relevance to the present study is research relating to individuals living with teacher and writer identities (Cremin and Baker, 2010; Mckinney and Giorgis, 2009).

Core identities

Much of the above discussion has concerned ways in which interaction with events, other individuals, society and culture can shape identities. Such thinking relates well to the dynamic nature of individual lives lived within cultures and societies and also helps explain why people in similar circumstances develop similar identities. However, it also risks casting individuals as merely performers or spectators, rather than engaged in relationship (Munro, 1998). If taken to its extreme, as a deterministic view of identity formation (Watson, 2006), with identity ineluctably shaped by circumstances, such a view would fail to account for the individual differences which underlie subjectivities. Moreover, it fails to account for any personal sense of self or subjectivity experienced by an individual (Moje and Luke, 2009), and which the individual may consider a core identity (Alsup, 2006, p.12). A more complete view takes individual agency into account and sees the self as emanating from 'the interplay

among institutional demands, restraints, and resources, on the one hand, and biographically informed, self-constituting social actions, on the other' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000, p.102).

This relationship may be seen as mutually constructive, or conversely, antagonistic. Gergen portrays his self as being besieged by social and professional demands amplified by new technology, amounting to a state of 'social saturation' (Gergen, 1991, p.3). Rather than this resulting in a loss of the 'personal self', however, heightened interactive opportunities or demands result in its production in 'a proliferating and variegated panorama of sites of self-knowledge' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000, p.96). In the context of the workplace, however, requirements to perform a particular kind of self, especially through 'deep acting' which involves deliberately evoking required feelings (rather than 'surface acting', simply behaving to order) may result in 'emotional stress and burnout' (Hochschild, 1979, p.558). Gergen and Hochschild both write of selves perceived subjectively, the former speaking of an 'authentic self' (Gergen, 1991, p.7), the latter of a personal self sensed keenly through emotions. Such a subjectively experienced self is, of course, central to a study based on personal accounts of life history and affords the only access to past interactions through which identities have been formed.

From a more objective standpoint, an individual's 'unique trajectory through 'discourse space'' may constitute a core identity (Gee, 2000, p.24) and any dynamic view of identity deals in a succession of events for any given individual. These events are not 'disjointed episodes' (Adawu and Martin-Beltrán, 2012, p.378) and the connection goes beyond the simple fact that there is a common participant (the self in question) in each of them. Individuals' actions and choices are taken in the light of both past experiences and imagined futures (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997) and past and future identities may each shape the

other (Mishler, 1999). Focus on this 'vast aggregation of [...] episodes and stories' leads to the idea that the source of personal identity is a 'narratively structured unity' (Polkinghorne, 1991, p.143).

Narrative

As noted in the previous section, language, and in particular the stories we tell about ourselves and that others tell about us have an important role to play in the construction of identities. Because of this, narratives have the power to give access to the identities of individuals and for this reason the present research employs a narrative methodology. A narrative approach also feels particularly appropriate for a study investigating the lives and practices of people who are themselves committed to the creation of narratives of various kinds. Narrative methodology has among its strengths the capacity to give participants the freedom to give an account of their experiences to the extent they wish and in whatever way they choose; more importantly for the research in hand, narrative allows people to both present and create identity as they speak. The relationship between narrative and identity construction will be considered in this chapter, while details of narrative methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3.

A good deal of the research into the writing identities of teachers has drawn on narrative data, including both written accounts and interviews (e.g. McKinney and Giorgis, 2009). For the researcher, narrative offers a means of gaining access to the lives of those they study, but for those people, narrative is a key way of both constructing and representing personal identities. As the representation of identities, narrative may be both 'the story we tell of ourselves' and 'the story others tell of us' (Sarup, 1996, p95) but both kinds of story are the starting point of an active process in which 'people tell others who they are, but even more

importantly, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are' (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.3).

One of the reasons for choosing a narrative approach is that people rarely (and writers and teachers hardly ever) find it difficult to express themselves at length and in detail in narrative form. Narrative is a universal and early-developing way in which human beings organise their understanding of the world and relate to other people. Speakers and writers commonly and regularly use narrative both to order and relate their experiences, giving them 'a unity that neither nature nor the past possesses so clearly' (Cronon, 1992, p.134). The interview questions used in this study were designed to be as neutral and open-ended as possible; their simple intention was to elicit recollections while allowing participants to respond in any way they chose. Personal narratives may also be used to remember, argue, convince, engage, or entertain (Bamberg and McCabe, 1998) and the speakers choice to engage in such linguistic acts can be as enlightening as the content of what they choose to relate. In respect of their own understandings, narratives may promote speakers' sense of themselves, of social situations, and of history (Bamberg and McCabe 1998, p.iii).

Narrative and the self

Since first person narratives enjoy a close relationship with the self, identity or identities of the narrator, the data for this study comes from writer-teachers who are invited to tell their own story. Individuals are free to select events which represent a 'preferred self' (Riessman, 2003) and may deepen the intended impression through choices of language and paralanguage. In this way, narrative is used to explain ourselves to others, but through the construction and reconstruction of the knowledge gained through experience we are also able to 'explain ourselves to ourselves' (Olson, 1995, p.122). Once again, this moves the

speaker beyond the domain of representation and allows narrative to 'fashion identities' (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009), or contribute to the construction of the self. Through repeated and consistent self-portrayal a speaker may take on the qualities of their narrated self (Olson, 1995; Wortham, 2001). In the case of 'Jane', for example, who recounts how she finally rejected victim status by reclaiming her baby from an orphanage, 'it might well be that she has, on many occasions used this triumphant construal of her life to encourage herself to be active and assertive in everyday life' (Wortham, 2001, p.5). Despite narrative's power to fix some events through culturally endorsed 'sacred stories' (Olson, 1995) or 'reification' (McVee, 2004), personal narratives have 'transformative potential' (Wortham, 2001).

The participants in this study have been selected because of their possession of writer, teacher and no doubt other identities, and autobiographical narratives allow individuals to express and manage multiple selves. One form this management takes is the revision of narratives as they are repeatedly exposed to a succession of audiences (Wortham, 2001). The use of narrative may render identity more complex, as the life story may be 'endlessly retold' (Mishler, 2004, p.102), but may also offer a way for a person to actively manage 'multiple, partly contradictory selves and experiences' (Wortham, 2001, p.7). Narrative then may be a means through which the self is negotiated with social and cultural context. This may be effected by a re-evaluation of oneself due to growing apprehension of the perspectives of others (McVee, 2004).

Narrative as text and performance

The analysis of narratives at a textual level show a variety of ways in which individuals choose to tell their story and thus present and construct identity. Labov and Waletzky (2003)

argue that the place to look for the fundamental structure of complex written narrative is in 'oral versions of personal experiences', and through analysing examples identify five essential structural features: orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda. Other suggested features include propositions, imagery, allusions and symbolic, thematic or topical patterns (Wortham, 2001).

Understanding of such features is likely to be of value when seeking to understand not just what is said in narratives but why the speaker has chosen to express it in a particular way. Doing this shifts the perspective to one in which narrative is not simply a text, but a performance. Seeing narrative as essentially situated in interaction highlights its power to permit speakers to make particular claims or points and more importantly, in the case of personal narratives to demonstrate and assert various aspects of the speaker's self, thereby enabling the fashioning of identities through narrative (Bamberg, 2005). In this characterisation, the performance of the narrative, which includes the words as spoken but also their enactment within a social and cultural context becomes the object of study. From this perspective, narrative is enactive, and through the act of narration relationships are established between the narrator and the audience (Wortham, 2001), the context of action being as significant as the spoken text. In personal (first person) narrative the speaker plays a dual role, being at once the storyteller and the protagonist of that story (Wortham, 2001). Narrative, then, is both act and enactment, 'a doing and a representation of doing' (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009, p.113)

The agency of the narrator must be admitted, since narrative is much more than a simple representation of raw experience: speakers must select and order events in a process which has been called 'emplotment' (Riessman, 2003). Labov and Waletzky make temporal ordering a defining feature of narrative, both in their formal prescription of the way in which

clauses must be temporally conjoined and in the requirement that narratives ‘recapitulate experience in the same order as the original events.’ (Labov and Waletzky, 2003, p.81). This is not to say that narratives consist entirely of the relating of selected core events; other identified elements include crucial contextualising information, flashes back or ahead (i.e. the inclusion of earlier or subsequent events in order to facilitate understanding of the core events) (McVee, 2004), irrealis clauses (in which hypothetical events are introduced in comparison with what really happened e.g. ‘I could have been killed’) and evaluation (McVee, 2004; Labov and Waletzky, 2003). Evaluation clauses may take up a significant proportion of a narrative, having several purposes, including conveying the feelings of the speaker (both within the action and in its telling), making a claim for the importance of the story to be heard and emphasising the significance of one particular event within the whole story. The existence of such features shows each spoken narrative to be much more than a simple account of ‘the facts’ since in the act of narration the narrator is presenting her or himself, even if s/he does not directly figure in the narrative itself. In interpreting the narratives at the heart of this study, as with any narrative, then, it is as important to attend to the speaker’s choices (including choices about what *not* to say) as to the simple ‘facts’ of the events recounted.

Narrative, agency and positioning

As noted above, the concept of agency is an important one in the consideration of narratives. Seen as a means through which an individual may construct meaning from experience, narrative is the way agency and intentionality are expressed in the process of ‘authoring a life’ (Olson, 1995, p.125). Taking the role of narrator is, in most cases, an act of agency, and furthermore, within the narrative recounted the narrator is in a position to make choices which affect the way her/his identity is construed by listeners.

Autobiographical narrative can contribute to the creation of the narrator's self 'by interactionally positioning the narrator in salient ways with respect to others' (Wortham , 2001, p.1). This positioning can be achieved, for example, through selection or emplotment. A narrator can position her/himself as in control of events, purposely initiating or causing action (Riessman, 2003) or conversely conceal agency or attribute it elsewhere.

At the level of representation, characters (including the narrator) are positioned *vis a vis* one another in the context of related action. They may be cast for example as protagonists, antagonists, perpetrators or victims: people who are in control of the action, or at the mercy of the agency of others, or of natural or quasi-natural forces such as luck, fate or (moral) character. At the same time the speaker is positioned in respect of the audience, taking for example, the role of moral instructor or apologist, or simply making excuses.

Finally, narrators must position themselves to themselves, by seeking to assert an application of characteristics conveyed beyond the events related: moving from 'I performed a brave act' to 'I am a brave person'. All these acts of positioning are achieved through linguistic choices of vocabulary and grammar and through paralinguistic means such as pauses, voice quality and body language (Bamberg, 1997). It is important to note that the representational function of a narrative is not, on its own, capable of accomplishing the full extent of the interactional positioning within a given autobiographical narrative (Wortham, 2001). Within the interview data for the present study there are many examples of speakers using positioning strategies to align themselves with or distance themselves from a range of institutions and individuals at various points in their life.

Narrative, society and culture

I have argued earlier in this chapter in favour of a conception of the self and identity as socially situated. In a similar way, story telling is both intimately linked to the individual self, and 'a fundamental means of social interaction' (Stanley and Temple, 2008, p.279). Rather than taking part in a purely individual endeavour, the storyteller must listen to and heed audience responses (both linguistic and paralinguistic) and to this extent narration is a collaborative practice, involving empathy as well as the exchange of information (Riessman, 2003). This is of particular relevance to the conduct of narrative interviews.

Narrators must also take account of the wider culture beyond (although often including) the immediate audience and in so doing their narrative positions them relative to their social and cultural world (Wortham, 2001). 'Sacred stories' (regularly told and respected narratives) both act as exponents of the public world and link individuals through their common experience of relating to them (Olson, 1995). Conversely, through recounting personal stories narrators reveal much about social and historical context (Riessman, 2003) while the shortest of anecdotes may 'pay tribute to the grand narratives of a culture' (McVee, 2004, p. 896). This feature of narratives was of particular importance to the pilot phase of the study, when the focus was on teachers' responses to a politically imposed curriculum, but also yielded valuable data in the substantive phase.

Narratives and learning

If narratives have 'transformative potential' (Wortham, 2001) in respect of their tellers it follows that they have a role to play in learning. This is not simply to say that we learn from experience, but that also we learn from the recounting of that experience, not least from the full range of listener responses to that recounting. McVee (2004) gives an account of an education student who becomes aware of the important role played by culture in her

teaching through repeated retellings of a particular event in school. Increasing understanding is revealed through increasingly numerous and insightful occurrences of evaluation within the successive narratives. Paradoxically, the power of narrative to support learning may lie in its capacity to enable one to view one's experiences in a distanced way, therefore questioning one's own assumptions and making new connections (Burnett, 2009). Teachers and students are free to foreground 'educationally promising' events in the construction of their own personal narrative (Wortham, 2001, p.6). During or after several of the interviews, participants have expressed or implied the view that through telling their story they realised something which had previously been unknown to them.

Several also recounted critical incidents, for example, learning resulting from unexpected (Olson, 1995) or painful events, the latter often accompanied by the judgement of others, especially teachers (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009). The concept of a 'turning point', often recognised retrospectively (Riessman, 2003) can be seen as the narrative exponent of the experience of the critical incident, though it may be through a narrative recounted long after the event that the learning takes place. Narrative is recognised as having a role to play in the learning of practice and in the field of teacher education, a curriculum based on 'narrative authority' has been advanced as a more effective alternative to those traditionally rooted in a positivistic view of knowledge (Olson, 1995).

Having considered the question of individuals who are both teachers and writers in terms of their identities, and the ways in which narrative can both construct and give access to those identities, in the next chapter I shall outline the ways in which this study intends to explore the writing and teaching identities of one particular set of writer-teachers.

3

Methodology

For this study, a methodology is required which will enable me to explore the complex identities of people who are both writers and teachers of writing. Whilst all the participants of the study share the characteristics of being, or having been, a primary teacher with a strong interest in writing, they differ widely in their outlook and experience. The aim of the study is to investigate the influences which shape the identity of each as a writer and as a teacher and then examine the ways in which teachers who are writers draw on a writer identity in their teaching. A methodology is needed which explores individuals' experience in detail and allows contrast and comparison in order to identify both diversity and common features.

The methodology needs to be in keeping with the social-constructivist principles of narrative research. Social constructivism sees knowledge as a social product which evolves through a process of negotiation within discourse communities under the significant influence of cultural and historical factors (Prawat and Floden, 1994). The shared understanding between two individuals which arises through verbal interaction grounded in common interests and assumptions, known as intersubjectivity, is, in this paradigm, understood to be the basis not simply of communication but also of the development of new knowledge, or learning (Kim, 2001).

From the outset I judged that the best way to arrive at this kind of knowledge was through speaking to teachers in interviews, wherever possible conducted face to face, gaining insight into subjectivities through the intersubjectivity of dialogue. This introduced me to the field of narrative enquiry, and to life history approaches in particular.

As explained in Chapter 1, this research has been conducted in two phases, with a shift in goals accompanied by some modification to the methodology. The goal of the pilot phase was to identify the influences shaping teachers' identities and in particular their resilience in the face of challenging new curricula. It was conceptualised as a comparative study and interviewed teachers from both England and New Zealand. In the substantive phase the focus switched more firmly onto issues relating to (English) teachers who are also writers. The main focus of this chapter is on the methodology used in the substantive phase of the project, but I shall refer to the pilot phase methodology in order to explain the final methodology in terms of my changing thinking.

The pilot phase interviews

In the pilot phase of the research, planning was in terms of semi-structured interviews, a technique I had used in past studies (e.g. Devereux et al., 2001; Bird and Eyres, 2000) Semi-structured interviews fall between the extremes of the highly structured interview, essentially an oral questionnaire, and an unstructured discussion. The first interview schedule was designed around nine questions, with most having between one and five additional prompt points, used to guide the interviewee towards the 'right' kind of response (See Appendix 1). The interviews were conducted as informally as possible, in the form of 'conversations' (Woods, 1985, p.13) or 'conversations with a purpose' (Bingham and Moore, 1959, p.59). Following each of the main questions, as well as using some of the prompts referred to above, I asked a number of additional questions, to seek elaboration or clarification or to bring the speaker back to the intended subject of the question.

Semi-structured interviews enabled me not only to elicit remembered facts and accounts of events, but also the respondents' attitudes, values, beliefs and motives, (Barriball and While, 1994) whether implicit or expressed. Complex and difficult questions could be explored through successive questions, sensitively posed. Issues could be approached in different ways, appropriate to different respondents, and there were also opportunities for respondents to introduce material of their own choosing. The character of the resulting interviews was one of dialogue, although the content of the resulting data is shaped by the agenda set by the prepared interview schedule, rather than that of the interviewee.

Early interviews were conducted using this methodology, with thematic analysis used to identify the kinds of information sought by the key questions. However, it was also clear that in between the direct answers to questions, were fragments, sometimes substantial, of

narrative accounts of events, chosen by the speaker to substantiate the point being made.

One interviewee (Heather), for example, in response to a question about whether writing had been a solitary experience for her as a child, offered:

'No, when I was learning how to write I would be sitting at the table and my mother would be helping [...] and my father as well. I remember being very distressed that my maternal grandmother didn't have a number for her house and telling him 'no it's wrong, you can't just do that, Daddy, because it won't get there' Obviously I hadn't quite joined up all my information.. but no, it wasn't a solitary activity.. we would talk about what would go into a letter.. what had been in a letter'

The memory of writing within the family setting had triggered a memory that she was unable to resist recounting. This is in keeping with Goodson's finding that, 'when talking to teachers about issues of curriculum development, subject teaching, school governance and general school organisation, they constantly import data on their own lives into the discussion' (Goodson, 1991, p. 142).

Another, (Gill) trying to dredge up memories of writing at school, suddenly lighted on this example of 'composition'.

'now I'll tell you something interesting, I've never told many people this before, I got paid sixpence and it would have been standard six the old standard six would be form 2 or it would be year 8, the kids paid me to tell their parents lies, I thought that was good because if you were late home in those days, anything, if you didn't go straight home it was a very strict life, and I could make up good ones and kids paid me so I did a great trade until of course eventually we got found out and I became the worst thing out, my parents were told and there was great shame and they came down to the school, but for a long time, I remember thinking them wow, that I was better than anyone else at that, I made up very good ones, and I remember there was this Dutch boy, they emigrated his parents and he was gorgeous and he came into our class and everybody, everybody, girls, wanted to have something to do with this gorgeous Dutch boy and he didn't know his way home, well of course he didn't know his way home for months, took us a while to work that out, and I was able to make good stories for the girls to tell him as to why they should take him home, they should help him home, so yes I'd forgotten about that, I forgot, I told great lies, great yes, sorry but I'd forgotten about that.'

Riessman (2003) admits to seeing such stories as infuriating digressions at a time when she was focused on gathering codable data, before later seeing them as attempts on the part of respondents to tell their own story, not simply what the researcher was setting out to find. However, the above responses also reveal valuable information of the kind specifically sought. It is clear that the additional information Heather gives makes her answer a good deal more convincing than a simple 'no', however categorically delivered, while Gill's story is a very clear example of how her history as an author began in oral storytelling.

One thing which was obvious from these interviews was that many of the related events had an intense affective meaning and were considered by the respondents to be of significant importance in their personal development. In a study which seeks to explore the unique identities of individual teachers this kind of information is especially important.

However, the schedule-focused interviewing style led me to suspect that I was to some extent suppressing respondents' opportunities to tell their own stories, both by guiding their understanding of what I wanted to hear and perhaps also by not giving them the space (by which I mean not only the time, but also the unspoken invitation which comes from such factors as body language, facial expressions and pace of speech) to make their contributions. Because of this, I felt I was missing the chance to collect from a source of data which was rich, not only because it promised to be highly detailed and specific to the individual, but also likely to bring information from outside the confines of my expectations. For this reason it made sense to explore the use of a narrative methodology for the re-focused substantive study.

Narrative methodologies

Narrative

The appeal of narrative as a means of studying human society and behaviour no doubt stems from its ubiquity in life. 'Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p.2). This is certainly borne out in my data for both phases, where all the participants have found opportunities to relate personal experiences not directly sought. People overwhelmingly interpret their experience of the world by recasting it in terms of stories, both internally as memories and socially as narratives to be shared with others.

Interest in the use of narrative at the heart of a research methodology became apparent in a wide range of fields from the late 1970s, to the extent that in the course of two or three decades writers felt able to refer to a narrative 'boom', 'frenzy' (Bamberg, 2007, p.1) or 'revolution' (Lieblich et al, 1998, p.1). The variations of narrative methodology are legion, as the term can apply to any kind of research based on narrative evidence (Lieblich et al., 1998). Although it may refer to a diverse range of research activities, it has been possible to define a set of essential features (Spector-Mersel, 2010), one of which is that all forms of narrative research represent a hermeneutic or interpretive, rather than positivist or behaviourist approach to enquiry (Lieberson, 1984)

The core data of this study are the life experiences of individual teachers and writers and the views and practices that arise from that experience, accessed through their personal, subjective accounts. Whilst, to a greater or lesser extent, all qualitative methodologies acknowledge the place of the subjective view, the subjectivity of the people studied is not always given the highest status. Narrative methodologies have the power to restore the subject to a position much closer to centre stage (Bamberg, 2007).

Stories represent a highly promising medium through which experience may be understood. 'If social reality is a narrative reality, then narratives are the natural channel for studying it' (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p.213). For the present study, with its focus on individuals in their social, professional and institutional context, narratives offer rich and illuminating data.

The privileging of subjectivity entails giving as much control as possible within the interview to the respondent, in contrast to more structured approaches to interviewing in which the researcher's interests and preconceptions tend to shape the developing dialogue (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008; Bauer, 1996). One visible difference between interviews of the two phases is that transcripts from the pilot phase feature more frequent interviewer interventions (usually questions), designed to probe a (researcher- chosen) theme. It is equally true, however, that most interviews in both phases also included material introduced at the respondent's initiative. In the substantive phase, questions steering the response into narrative ('narrativising') tend to receive fuller answers. 'What is your greatest fear?' may prompt confusion or a single word response, whereas 'tell me about a time when you were fearful' is likely to be much more productive (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008, p.308).

Since narrative research must, by definition, allow the interviewee to tell their own story, the invitation to speak, and subsequent structure of the dialogue must contain as few restrictions as possible. Furthermore, a distinctive characteristic of narrative studies is that the participant is in control of the story and how it is told. This control runs from, at the data gathering stage 'making the relevance of the telling clear' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008, p. 303) to consultation at the final draft stage, either at the level of seeking agreement, or at a deeper level of seeking comments for incorporation (Spector-Mersel, 2010; Muchmore, 2002; Laslett and Rapoport, 1975).

The concept of 'personal narrative' has been employed in different ways by different researchers. It may refer to one individual's entire life story (*e.g.* Muchmore, 2001), to brief, discrete stories (*e.g.* Labov and Waletzky, 2003; Bamberg, 2007) or to accounts built up through a succession of interviews (*e.g.* Mishler, 1999). The present study uses elements of the second of these and of strategies associated with the third, in particular in the 'presentation of and reliance on detailed transcripts of interview excerpts' and 'a comparative approach to interpreting similarities and differences among participants' life stories' (Riessman, 2003, p. 336).

Life history

The foundation of the life history approach is the study of 'narratives about one's life' (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1958 cited by Bertaux and Kohli, 1984, p.217)) and as a form of narrative methodology, life history has been used extensively in the field of educational research (*e.g.* Walker and Goodson, 1991). Life history documents well the way in which teachers make a considerable investment of the self in their professional activity (Woods, 1985) often providing powerful evidence to contradict the view that teachers are neutral and 'interchangeable' (Goodson, 1992). Goodson also points to the well-documented gap between what can be learnt from published sources and what is to be found through questioning participants in an event. Without an understanding of teachers' lives, their work in schools cannot be fully understood. Additionally, a focus on the detail of teachers' lives has the benefit of increasing the relevance of research to fellow professionals (Woods, 1985) and also its accessibility.

One characteristic which differentiates life history from straightforward biography is the importance afforded to relating a personal narrative to its historical context. Although the

historical narrative of politics and policy which contextualises much of what participants reported in the pilot phase is not given such prominence in the later interviews, it is a context which cannot be ignored, and something to which respondents frequently refer. Goodson draws a crucial distinction between *life story* which is centred on the subject as an individual and *life history*, whose 'crucial focus [...] is to locate the teacher's own life story alongside a broader contextual analysis' (Goodson, 1992, p. 6). This implies drawing on a range of evidence beyond the subject's first person account. The researcher, through building a detailed and contextualised description of a subject's life is able to 'uncover the patterns of social relations and the special processes that shaped them' (Bertaux and Kohli, 1984, p. 215). Goodson identifies these patterns as to be found 'within the deeply structured and embedded environment of schooling' (Goodson, 1991, pp. 148-9). In the present study, subjects' experience as both students and teachers in school are explored through their personal narratives.

In the pilot phase, the detail of local context was not explored in any great depth, and greater prominence was given to the role of national policy, the understanding and true consequences of which have been explicitly connected to teachers' life-histories (MacLure, 1988). Whilst experience of context, including the national context will inevitably be an important factor in teachers' (or indeed anybody's) accounts of their lives, the focus in the substantive phase interviews was on personal experience; the extent to which the subject of policy arises is in the control of the participants themselves.

Within a wider narrative approach, context is partly embodied by communally shared stories or *master narratives*. Stories may be seen as being owned by the teller, but they are also 'part of larger, communally-shared practices of sense making and interpretation' (Bamberg, 2007, p.3). Master narratives, as stories which the individual perceives as belonging to

numerous or powerful elements within society, serve to guide the behaviour of members of communities and societies. Children's stories based on principles such as sharing resources or the sanctity of private property, and a particular school's collection of oft-repeated stories of overbearing management are examples of master narratives which induct people into communities and help guide their lives. The master narrative behind many of the pilot phase interviews in England was clearly provided by the National Literacy Strategy, referred to as a set of documents or prescriptions (in social constructivist terms, socially constructed artefacts), but also in terms of often stressful events and further evidenced in the language of the participants concerned. For example, Heather alludes to a time before that master narrative:

'I think in those days it was a very private thing in your classroom. You didn't really know or care how other people taught writing, because you knew that you'd got the freedom in your class'

This idea was particularly useful when I was pursuing my original research question relating to the social and political forces that could be linked to changes or maintenance of pedagogical practices, and so was influential in the development of the early interview schedule. While the study's focus on historical change has, in its later phase, diminished, many aspects of the methodology remain highly relevant, not only because of its equal utility in respect of other forms of context, but also because to a greater or lesser extent historical context is also an important factor in the teaching and writing lives of all the participants in the substantive phase.

Within the domain of sociology, Bertaux and Kohli (1984) trace the practice of life history back to the Chicago school in the 1930s, but note that only relatively recently (e.g. Denzin, 1989) have studies focused on 'norm-abiding' subjects, rather than those who are in some way deviant or anomalous. Where respondents are likely to feel marginalised from a society

in which, according to their perception, the researcher is part of an established or even elite group, then strictures designed to empower the respondent and visibly limit the authority of the researcher are clearly essential. With 'norm-abiding' respondents this is less likely to be the case, though still a possibility to which the methodology needs to explicitly address.

In the main, teachers and writers, even when expressing resistance or opposition to certain aspects of their work are, for these purposes, 'norm abiders'. During the teaching careers of the participants there have certainly been periods of conflicting norms, where for example a nationally required approach to assessment runs counter to the prevailing ethos within the teaching profession, or just within the staff of a school. There are certainly examples in my data (especially the early interviews) of teachers feeling under stress because of such conflicts, but usually this conflict has been between one norm and another, rather than the kind which casts an individual as a complete outsider. Certainly, I have noticed no sign of the participants in this study being, for example, resentful of my researching them or intimidated by my perceived status.

Life history has been characterised as 'making sense of the stories people tell about themselves' (Stronach, 1988, p.1) and as well as being a narrative approach is consistent with the tenets of ethnography in striving to reflect a view of teaching as an activity both complex and personal which cannot be well researched in ways based on detailed measurement (Muchmore, 2002); a more subtle and flexible approach, one which does not view knowledge as something pre-existing, to be retrieved by the researcher is needed to make links between experience, beliefs and practice.

Life history methodology has been employed to pursue a variety of goals: for example, the articulation of a person's subjective point of view, the reconstruction of meaning structures or the identification of social structures of which the subject may not be fully aware (Bertaux and Kohli, 1984). These outcomes imply different kinds of relationship between the researcher and the researched, with implications for their respective degrees of ownership of whatever final text emerges. At one end of the continuum is a European trend identified by Bertaux and Kohli (1981), to treat the subject as an informant. Contrastingly, for Goodson (1992), a defining feature of life history –and one which distinguishes it from 'life story'– is collaboration, with the researcher and the 'researched' shaping the account together in the light of the wider social and political context. The latter approach is adopted by this study.

Conceiving of the interview as a co-constructed text implies a different relationship between the parties to the interview from a process in which the researcher is seen as dominant and an authority. Use of the term 'conversation' has been preferred over 'interview' (Woods, 1985), in order to emphasise a more equal relationship than is traditionally expected, with the research process (which, as noted above, is founded on the co-construction of knowledge through intersubjectivity) seen as a 'mutual endeavour'. And if the development of 'genuine friendship' (Woods 1985) is rather too much to hope for in the course of an hour or two, it is certainly possible for the tone of the interviews to be friendly. Muchmore (2001), whose subject was already a friend, characterises the research relationship as 'complex and personal', rather than something akin to a business transaction. Woods argues that the term 'conversation' emphasises a more equal relationship than is traditionally expected of an interview. Because the approach in this study aims to be a collaborative one, I refer to the teachers and writers interviewed in the final set of interviews, the substantive phase, as 'participants'.

Whatever the relationship between researcher and researched it can never be understood in terms of two entirely separate individuals or as anything that might be called purely subjective or purely objective. Even a researcher attempting scrupulously to relay a respondent's story will inevitably mediate the narrative, for example through the selection of sections to publish and even through the questions originally asked and the way they are (probably differently) perceived by the respondent. Better then to accept that any account entails a developed intersubjectivity and is an artefact of shared authorship. For the sake of the reader, who in their turn will need to construct the knowledge, it is incumbent on the researcher to describe as fully as possible such details as the frequency of interviews, information given before and after interviews and how they present themselves to the respondent (and in so far as is possible, how they are perceived) and the researcher's own views on key topics. This last point is addressed in the present study by the autobiographical section in Chapter 1.

Collaborative approaches have the potential to retain the teacher's voice throughout the process of analysis and refinement, and right up to the final publication of findings. At the same time they can ensure that the participant's role is not simply one of giver; through involvement with the process their own understandings will have developed too. As has already been noted, a number of participants, in both phases of this study, have expressed the view that taking part has raised their awareness or understanding of some aspect of their life history.

Life history is an approach well suited to the investigation of individual teachers and the way in which their individuality contributes to their effectiveness. This is, obviously, especially relevant in the context of a doctrine of 'teacher interchangeability' (Goodson, 1980, cited by

MacLure, 1988, p.1), the effects of which I was particularly keen to explore in the pilot phase. The methodology has often been used explicitly to investigate the experiences through which individuals develop as teachers. Studies of teachers' lives frequently highlight evidence of the importance of life experiences in their professional formation and subsequently in the way they exercise their professional responsibilities (Knowles, 1992; Muchmore, 2001).

Primary teachers are generalists, supporting learners as they develop skills and knowledge across the curriculum, but most are also specialists in one aspect of the curriculum and for many the enthusiasm for their specialism is as strong in their non-professional life as in their teaching. One of the pilot phase interviewees, (Peter), expresses his firm belief that he needs to be a writer in order to teach writing well, adding:

'I've seen that with science-mad teachers, ... if you've got a passion for things it certainly rubs off'.

For her part MacLure, (1988) instances involvement in sport, whilst the present study, as Peter himself does in the rest of his interview, focuses on the use and enjoyment of writing. The beliefs of Muchmore's subject, Anna, about literacy stem, above all, from her early life experiences and from her professional observations of how children learn (Muchmore, 2001). To understand fully Anna's (reportedly highly successful) practice it is therefore insufficient to call as evidence curriculum policies (which, as it happens, she often ignores) or formal theories of literacy. The pilot phase interview data indicated a similar imbalance, with 'informal' influences such as early home experiences and the example of a charismatic mentor or teacher being much stronger than formal undergraduate training. Findings such as this contributed to my resolution to give greater scope for respondents to talk about their personal life in the later set of interviews.

Epiphanies and critical incidents

The concept of *epiphany* or *critical incident*, discussed in Chapter 2, is central to the life history approach. Denzin (1989) lists 'epiphany' as one of the features by which life history has historically been defined and considers the description of 'turning point moments' (Denzin, 1989, p.7) to be essential to the biographical method. Goodson (1991) writes of '*critical incidents* in teachers' lives and specifically in their work which may crucially affect perception and practice' (Goodson, 1991, p. 147, italics in original). Woods (1985) makes critical incidents his initial focus, with the aim of eventually constructing a model categorising teacher adaptations. Muchmore's (2001) analysis leads him to conclude that 'authentic change occurs when one's beliefs have been challenged in some way and found to be lacking' (Muchmore, 2001, p. 106). The pilot phase interview data reveal several critical incidents, including some arising from conflict between long-held beliefs and policy demands. Not all changes recounted can be attributed to a respondent's beliefs or understandings being inherently inadequate in some way; several teachers felt constrained to change their way of working in order to comply with a newly imposed orthodoxy. This has been called 'inauthentic' change: a change in behaviour rather than conviction (Muchmore, 2002). The pilot phase interviews found critical incidents experienced early in life and in home contexts to be at least as significant as those experienced in professional contexts.

Presenting and representing the self

This study's focus on identities arises from a conception of teaching as depending on the way individual teachers teach. Within a life history paradigm, many have seen the personal features the individual teacher brings to the classroom in terms of a distinctive 'self'. Often there appear to be overlaps between various notions of the two concepts identity and self.

There is wide agreement (e.g. Stronach, 1988; MacLure, 1988) that life history methodology is not equipped to reveal an underlying or essential self, even if such a thing were to exist. Selves inevitably embrace contradictions, ambivalences and inconsistencies (Woods, 1985), and regularly change throughout life (Schütze, 1976 ,cited by Bertaud and Kohli, 1984).

Narrative methodologies see research participants as agentive, actively constructing their self through their narrative, in part through the ways in which they position themselves (Wortham, 2001). Although the transcribed words of an interview may feel like the very concrete raw material from which a thesis may be constructed, 'we establish our database in the sands of image management and self presentation' (Stronach, 1988). This views the self, or multiple selves, as constantly changing and only definable relative to the social context in which it is acting. Paradoxically then, an approach which foregrounds the autonomy of the individual sees the self as understandable only in relation to other selves with which it interacts.

This position taken by the present study, embracing dynamic, multiple selves, has much in common with the idea of multiple identities, and the concept of positioning discussed in Chapter 2; it also considers identities to be created in the act of narrative.

The research methodology

The participants

For the substantive phase of this study I needed to identify a group of participants, each of whom had both substantive experience of teaching and a very clear personal commitment to writing.

In the pilot phase, participants were identified opportunistically, as it was clear from the start that primary teachers with a special interest in writing are quite difficult to find. In the substantive phase my intention was to find a small group of writers and teachers who both demonstrated a strong personal commitment to writing and who collectively brought a range of experiences which could illustrate various facets of teaching and writing. To facilitate the search for such people I drafted a provisional typology, arriving at four categories, as follows:

1. Teachers who are committed non-professional writers

Several of the pilot phase teachers showed a considerable commitment to writing for their own purposes. Writing activities included diary and letter writing, as well as unpublished stories. Members of this category would be working currently as primary teachers, and consider writing to be a significant voluntary activity. They may write fiction for pleasure, or stories to share with their pupils. They might be committed diarists, bloggers or letter writers. Whatever the genre, they show a continuing commitment to the practice of writing; they are writers in the way that some people are gardeners. Other people, including their pupils, are likely to be aware that they are active writers.

In addition to such purely self-motivated writers, I was aware of a number of professional development schemes which set out to foster teachers' expertise as writers with the specific aim of improving their teaching skills. I was interested in the possibility of including a teacher who had taken part in such a scheme, though not to the exclusion of teachers with a longstanding and personal commitment to writing.

2. Teachers who have become writers

A number of well known published authors have in the past been class teachers. For some, *e.g.* Lawrence, Orwell (TTC, 2014) this may have been simply to support their writing, but others, such as Michael Morpurgo, Philip Pullman and David Almond have had substantial teaching careers. Among the pilot phase participants two had used personal and school experiences to create work for publication, one of them eventually leaving the classroom to become a full-time writer.

The main current professional activity for people in this category must be writing, which may be in any genre (*e.g.* fiction, poetry, academic, journalism, blogging) but they must also have substantial primary classroom teaching experience.

3. Writers who have become teachers

This is a category not represented in the pilot phase data. Members of this category have substantial professional experience as writers, having worked, for example, as journalists, scriptwriters or creative writers. They have switched careers in order to become primary classroom teachers, and this is now their main professional activity. The children they teach are likely to be aware of their writing history.

4. Writers who work in schools and alongside teachers

Members of this category are published writers without a formal teaching background who have developed a strong interest in working with groups of primary school pupils, possibly in partnership with teachers. Their aim in this is to raise children's skills or motivation, and probably both. They may also be concerned to influence the practice of teachers. Personally,

they see writing as their core activity, one in which they are practiced and highly proficient, even if school work contributes significantly to their income. It may be that they have developed routines for working in schools which amount to a personal pedagogy.

Many established writers spend proportion of their time working alongside teachers in their classrooms, The NAWE professional directory (NAWE, 2014), for example, has 68 pages of writers offering their services. A writer in this category would be able to view the intersection of writing and teaching from the perspective of a specialist writer, without the kinds of preconceptions that an experienced teacher might have.

As with the pilot phase participants, finding individuals to fit these categories was not easy. To my surprise, teachers who are committed to writing as a 'spare time' activity proved to be particularly difficult to identify. On the other hand, more than once, when I had finally made contact with a particular kind of writer or teacher a second person in that category became known to me. I finally settled on five participants, who between them offered most of the qualities identified in the original typology. Details of these five participants are as follows.

Andy

Andy has worked as a full-time writer of poetry and prose for children for over 15 years, but before that worked for a similar period as a primary teacher, both as a class teacher in a number of schools and in the last few years as teacher of children with special educational needs in the area of literacy. He was selected as a 'teacher who has become a writer', but I was also aware of his work in schools, presenting his own work to primary age children. Although he did not bring the naive perspective of one who has never been a teacher, he fits some of the profile of a 'writer who works in school alongside teachers'.

Paul

Paul was identified as a 'writer who has become a teacher'. He fits the specification quite closely, as he worked as an online and print journalist before any involvement with teaching. After his first year in teaching, however, Paul returned to a journalistic career, before returning once more to teaching, so he could equally be considered a 'teacher who has become a writer'.

Philippa

Philippa is an experienced primary teacher who is also a prolific writer in a number of genres, including stories (mostly for children and young people) and blogs. She has sought, unsuccessfully, conventional publication and has also published her work online. She fits the category 'teachers who are committed non-professional writers' perfectly.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth also presented herself as a 'teacher who has become a writer', in her case largely a writer of non-fiction for academic and professional audiences, who had for some years worked as a teacher of both early years and special school classes. In the interview it emerged that she is also a 'non-professional writer' of fiction and poetry, though this interest has developed since she left classroom teaching.

Claire

Like Philippa, Claire was identified as a 'teacher who is a committed non-professional writer', in her case via a DCSF (Education department) professional development programme, 'Teachers and TAs as writers' (HCTS, 2014). Before the interview I was not sure of the extent

to which Claire actively pursued writing as an activity outside her professional life, but felt that as a teacher who consciously made use of a writer identity in the classroom and was willing to shared that identity with teachers from other schools, she would have a particular perspective on the intersection of writing and teaching.

While one of the original categories, *Writers who work in schools and alongside teachers* is not fully represented by these participants, most are represented by more than one person. Needless to say, when I began interviewing these individuals it soon became apparent that the reality of their writing and teaching lives was in most cases much more complex than my typology had envisaged.

The interviews

The evidence for the substantive phase of this study comes from interviews with the five participants listed above. These were all planned to be face to face, but circumstances meant that one (with Elizabeth) had to be conducted by telephone. All interviews were digitally recorded and then fully transcribed prior to analysis. Although the interviews with the two participants who were no longer classroom practitioners (Elizabeth and Andy) took place over a number of sessions (three and two respectively), difficulty in securing interviews with serving teachers meant that in the substantive phase, for the three class teachers I had to be content with a single interview (as in the pilot phase).

This is contrary to the approach of a number of researchers, particularly in the field of life history, who have stressed the need for data gathering over a period of time. The use of one-off interviews, is explicitly dismissed as yielding a 'highly partial, reactive and singular

facet of biography' (Stronach, 1988, p.1). Woods (1985) counsels between three and ten interviews for each subject and he links the progress through these to stages of self-revelation, with the researcher earning 'total acceptance' only in later interviews (Woods, 1985, p.19). Such views are motivated by a concern that a trusting and open relationship should develop and also relate to questions of reliability (Woods, 1985; Muchmore, 2001). Mishler (1986) drawing on the work of Cicourel (1982), discusses the shortcomings of the 'one-shot interview' in terms of the lack of contextual knowledge entailed. 'in short, a meeting between strangers unfamiliar with each other's "socially organised contexts" of meaning' (Mishler, 1986, p.24).

Whilst I understand these reservations, I had no choice but to proceed with the substantive phase on the basis of single interviews. As a researcher with years of experience working in similar roles and contexts to the participants I felt confident (though not complacent) about my understanding of their 'socially organised contexts of meaning', but also took care to plan the interview sessions in a way which would engender trust in me and give participants every opportunity to tell their own story in their own way. In two cases, trust was enhanced by the fact that the participant and I had been introduced to each other by respected mutual colleagues and in one case the participant was a long-standing family friend (a strategy used by Muchmore (2001)). In all cases I sought to engender trust through presenting myself as an interested fellow professional, asking only open questions and so not appearing to lead the participants in what they said, allowing each part of the interview to run for as long as the participant wanted to talk and including an invitation at the end of the interview to say anything additional they wanted to.

Following initial analysis of the interviews, each participant had the opportunity to read and respond to a first draft of their case-analysis chapter and in all but one case (Philippa) this resulted in further (written) dialogue which significantly informed the final version of the chapter.

The conduct of the interviews in the two phases had much in common. As in the pilot phase, the final set of interviews can still be characterised as semi-structured and formally the two sets are similar in many ways. In each case I had a set of quite open questions which I hoped would be starting points for participants to tell me about various aspects of their experience. In the interviews I kept very loosely to the schedule, allowing topics to arise naturally and in the context of the unfolding narratives.

However, what had changed in the substantive phase was my understanding of the purpose of the interview dialogue. In the pilot phase, although concerned to allow interviewees to tell their own story, I saw the encounter in quite transactional terms, with teachers giving me testimony about things in their past. Questions and answers were seen as 'stimulus and response' (Mishler, 1986, p.14) with the underlying assumption that asking the same question of each interviewee would yield responses which would be comparable or equivalent. Also underlying this is a 'correspondence view of the truth' (MacLure, 1993) where the truest account is a set of words corresponding closest to a supposed reality to be discovered. This has been described as 'rescu[ing] authentic pasts from dissimulating owners' (Stronach, 1988, p.2) and as such the antithesis of trust.

In the substantive phase, my position had moved on from the behaviourism implied by the pilot phase approach and I preferred to see the interview text not as a transaction involving

an individual's representation of past events, but an act of intersubjective construction, both of a narrative past and of developing identities. Moreover, the construction is a joint act, undertaken by two people 'talking together, not "behaving" as stimulus senders and response emitters' (Mishler, 1986, p.22), with the improvisational nature of my framing of questions and other utterances becoming a legitimate part of the text. As well as affecting the way in which I conducted the interviews -for example giving me a greater sense of freedom over how and when I intervened in the dialogue with the consequence, I hoped, that participants would be able to tell their own story as fully and freely as they wished -this view also has consequences for the way in which the text was analysed.

Before each interview I explained the purpose of my study in quite general terms. I introduced the research to each of the final phase respondents by saying something like, 'I'm interviewing (past and present) teachers about their experience of writing in their personal and professional lives, and I'm interested in whether there are any links between the two.' In the light of the finding that all the respondents had apparently, prior to the interview, made links between their life experiences and their thoughts about teaching, this does not seem to have been particularly restrictive. At this point in the interview I also made it clear that the data would be anonymized.

In the light of the changed perspective of the substantive phase interviews, the interview schedule (see Appendix 1 for both the pilot phase and substantive phase schedules) was significantly simplified, amounting to exploration of the following four areas:

- early and formative literacy experiences;
- the place of writing in adult life;

- the relationship between personal experience of writing and how you teach/taught writing;
- anything else you would like to add.

Although these areas featured as questions on the *aide memoire* I used in the interviews, they are not listed here as questions because I did not use the same wording in each interview, preferring to frame each line of thought in a way which fitted in with the flow of conversation. This is in keeping with the view that what participants say does not amount simply to responses to standardised questions but must be understood in the context of the meaning of the whole interview (Mishler 1986).

I was concerned that the first invitation to speak should not only be as open as possible, but it should also enable the respondent to do so on safe and comfortable ground. Fischer and Goblirsch offer the following example of an initial 'question' designed to allow the interviewee to tell their own story: 'Please tell me your family and life story. I will not interrupt you, I will listen to you and only write down some notes. When you finish I will ask you some questions according to my notes (Fischer and Goblirsch, 2007, p.40)' In similar vein, having explained that the focus of the study is on writing, I began my substantive phase interviews with the question, 'What are your memories of writing in your childhood?' This was not a question without risks. The participant may have had no memories of childhood writing, or so many that they did not know which to offer as significant, or those memories may have been something they did not want to talk about. In the event, however, the question proved a good starter and early writing a topic on which all participants were all able to talk at some length.

Subsequent questions focus on teasing out details of the story, avoiding judgment or confrontation and building as far as possible on things the participant has said. These questions were in keeping with the advice of Holloway and Jefferson (2008, pp.307-8) to:

- use open-ended not closed questions; the more open the better;
- elicit stories;
- avoid 'why' questions;
- follow up using respondents' ordering and phrasing.

This collaborative (perhaps a better term would be 'colloquial') view of the interview process helps address a potential conflict between the needs of the researcher and the needs of the research 'subject'. Conventional question and answer interviewing tends to suppress the subject's own story as the interviewer pursues their own interests (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008; Mishler 1986), further guiding the responses 'by selecting the theme and topics; by ordering the questions and by wording questions in his or her language' (Bauer, 1996, cited by Hollway and Jefferson, 2008, p.302). Fischer and Goblirsch's opening question (above) sets out to avoid such pitfalls by being very open indeed, but it would be naive to see it as respecting only the need of the respondents to tell their own story. Research always has an aim and is always constructed to pursue that aim. The outcome of research based on such an open question will no doubt in part be shaped by the choice of participants, for example. Moreover, how can we be sure that the researcher's interest in certain aspects of the story, perhaps conveyed through a line of follow up questions, perhaps expressed unconsciously through facial expression, tone of voice or body language will not steer the narrative in a particular direction? In this study it is accepted that the resulting text is to some extent a synthesis of the interviewee's own story and the researcher's desire to learn about the place

of writing in their life. Reading the transcripts it is clear that some passages spring freely from individual memory. Often they give the impression of having been told before. At other points the participant appears to be working (sometimes struggling) to relate their experience to a question I have asked them to consider. Perhaps at such points I am asking them to contribute to a story which is more 'mine' than theirs, but in any event such speech events are the forging of a new element to the participant's story, an example of narrative (and identity) being constructed in the telling.

Given such complexity, it is vital that analysis be based on the interpretation of meaning. The whole interview is seen as discourse (Mishler, 1986, p.7). Notwithstanding the above admission that the researcher's goals inevitably shape some parts of the text, the aim remains to allow as far as possible the expression of the participant's intended meanings rather than discrete items of information specified in advance by the interviewer for the purpose of atomistic analysis. This is consonant with the characterisation of life history as 'making sense of the stories people tell about themselves' (Stronach 1988, p.1).

The way I present myself, both within and outside the interviews will have a bearing on how openly the participants feel able to talk. This has been mentioned above in terms of developing trust, and since I needed to develop this trust early in a single interview it was important to take conscious steps. The role of language to act as a bridge or a barrier should not be overlooked and I am very happy, for example, to heed Woods's (1985) strictures against 'tortuous sociologese' in favour of 'ordinary teacher discourse'. As a past primary teacher I feel quite comfortable not just with the grammar and vocabulary of the teaching world but also with the professional and personal contexts to which the language of English primary teachers refers and in which it is used. However, the years which have elapsed since

I last taught full-time mean that this is not completely unproblematic. During the pilot phase interviews, I was aware that National Curricula and other policy and guidance documents have a vocabulary of their own which is no longer a natural part of my own language. I am equally aware that such language becomes a deeply embedded part of teachers' distinctive discourse. Despite my almost two decades in the classroom, to those currently working as teachers I run the risk of creating a barrier by sounding like a naïve outsider through the misuse of current terminology. Fortunately, teaching and learning are about much more than curriculum terminology and for most of the interviews I felt that both the participant and I were 'speaking the same language'. At moments of uncertainty, rather than risk using language I was not certain of I would have recourse to a general expression such as 'current requirements' or 'all the things you have to do'.

Conceiving of the interview as a co-constructed text implies a different relationship between the parties to the interview from a process in which the researcher is seen as dominant and an authority. Interviews were conducted in a way that was conversational and, as already noted, friendly.

A dialogue in which the research participant is empowered to lead the lines of discussion has the potential to introduce many topics and lines of enquiry unplanned by the researcher. Not only does that mean that separate interviews may cover very different ground, it also means that themes introduced in one interview can be introduced by the researcher into another. More widely, themes from the pilot phase interviews influenced the schedule, as well as questions formulated in the interviews, for the substantive phase.

Collaborative approaches have the potential to retain the teacher's voice throughout the process of analysis and refinement, and right up to the final publication of findings, as in the case of the present study, through sharing the analysis post interview and modifying it as appropriate.

After each interview I chatted informally with the respondent, in later interviews, tentatively sharing a few thoughts about what the data has revealed so far. After the pilot phase interviews, I had no further contact with the participants and so they had no involvement in the way in which their words were interpreted and represented. As already noted, the substantive phase participants had the opportunity to comment on a draft of the chapter based on their interview. In fact, several of them asked to see drafts before I had even had the chance to offer. This is perhaps indicative of a greater sense of empowerment felt by the substantive phase respondents.

Transcription and analysis

Each interview was, with the participant's permission, digitally recorded. It was transcribed by me as soon after the interview as possible. All the words spoken (including fillers such as 'you know', 'like' and 'er') were transcribed and punctuation used to mark pauses and breaks rather than to demarcate conventional sentences, which are usually rare in spoken English. No attempt was made to regularise grammar or any other aspect of what was said. No systematic attempt was made to record features such as intonation, pace and emphasis, though occasionally I made a marginal note where I thought these features had some significance; I thought it was noteworthy, for example that one participant spoke slowly and carefully about her personal experience, but much more rapidly (and apparently confidently) about techniques she had learnt as part of a CPD programme.

These limitations on the depth of transcriptions were mostly for pragmatic reasons -even this degree of detail takes many hours of work- but also because I felt confident that this would be sufficient information for me to retain the meaning of what was said. Even the most detailed of transcriptions can only be a 'partial representation' (Mishler, 1986, p.48). It has been argued (Paget, 1983) that not to transcribe prosodic details is to 'rework' the text by removing important information and so leaving the reader of the research to trust the interpretation of the researcher. This is certainly true, but it is also true that no transcription system is capable of representing the spoken text perfectly. Any transcription system requires interpretation -do Paget's capitalised syllables represent loudness, a sudden rise in pitch or increase in pace, for example? In a sense, the more choices the researcher makes about which features to include, the further the transcript gets from being 'the unvarnished truth'. As well as the inevitable weaknesses of attempts to transcribe spoken language, transcripts also do not usually accommodate paralinguistic features such as facial expression and body language, nor contextual details. All things considered, I felt that the interviews as transcribed represented an accurate record of what the participants intended to say, and this view was overwhelmingly confirmed by responses of the participants to the draft analyses I shared with them.

The interviews were analysed individually, initially by coding the transcripts. The coding system needed to be open, as the interview schedule offered only the broadest of themes and different topics arose with all the individual participants. Not using the interview schedule as a framework for analysis meant I was free to be led by the meaning of what the participants told me, coding the text 'narratively' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.131). I chose not to use coding software (*e.g.* NVivo) as although such tools do allow flexibility I felt their use might exercise some pressure to maintain early established categories; instead I

analysed each interview using a set of blank word documents, allowing categories to develop out of the texts. For Philippa, for example, I had separate documents on which I collected what she said on the following subjects:

- Agency
- Audience
- Influences
- Parents_
- Positioning against_
- Reading
- School experiences_
- Teacher identity asserted_
- Teacher identity challenged_
- Teacher influence_
- Teaching experiences
- Writer identity asserted_
- Writer identity challenged

An example of one of Philippa's data tables can be seen in Appendix 2.

Through sorting in this way, 'meanings emerge, develop, are shaped by and in turn shape the discourse.' (Mishler, 1986, p.138). This is not to say that many of the same categories did not arise from transcript to transcript; many common categories emerged. Where they did I

was confident that the reason was that these were things which participants wanted to include in their personal narrative, rather than artefacts of either a tightly specified interview schedule or a prejudicial coding system.

In the next stage of analysis, quotations were reordered (effectively creating sub-categories) on a table, alongside interpretive notes and comments which would be the basis of the eventual text. An extract from Philippa's analysis table is included in Appendix 2 (the whole document runs to over 40 pages). The final part of this stage of the analysis was the drafting of a summary text, which would eventually become one of chapters 5-9.

Analysis of data through the development of themes in other narrative and life history studies has commonly involved the active participation of subjects (Woods, 1985; Stronach, 1988; Muchmore, 2001; MacLure, 1988) as the investigation unfolds. This can include sharing drafts with participants and securing their endorsement of the account (Muchmore, 2001; Laslett and Rapoport, 1975). As already noted, this first draft of the chapter was sent to the participant concerned for their comments, which would eventually be incorporated, as appropriate, into the final draft.

A further analysis was conducted through comparison of the five analysed transcripts. In this case most of the categories had been established in the individual analyses and now I was looking for, among other things, 'story lines that interweave and interconnect, gaps and silences that become apparent, tensions that emerge, and continuities and discontinuities that appear' (Clandinin and Connolly 2000 p131). These were first analysed by use of data tables (see Appendix 2) and finally synthesised in writing to become chapter 10.

Gauging the truth of an interpretive account

A narrative study such as the present one does not set out to prove (in either sense of the word) any particular hypothesis or theory nor to establish general rules or make predictions in the way an experimental study would. Experimental (or quasi-experimental) approaches are highly limited in what they can reveal about social interaction, owing to the complex and context-bound nature of human encounters. 'Context' in this context may include elements relating to immediate past events, competing claims on an individual's attention and the wider patterns of culture. It has been concluded that for these reasons, general laws of social behaviour can never be determined (Gergen, 1978).

Conventional biographers take it upon themselves to endorse one particular version of the truth (Maclure, 1993). However, doubt has been cast on the advisability of a single "true" interpretation of events in the face of competing plausible interpretations (Mishler, 1986, p. 115). As already noted, a 'correspondence view of the truth', is not the goal of narrative studies, where participants are seen as agentic, actively constructing a self as they work through their narrative. As noted earlier, this entails a view of the self as multiple, fluid and socially contextualised.

It is not appropriate to apply such concepts as reliability, generalisability and validity to narrative enquiry as to do so would amount to 'squeez[ing] the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.184). It is therefore necessary to appeal to other criteria. *Apparency* and *verisimilitude* (Van Maanen, 1988, cited in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) seem to sum up Muchmore's practical criteria - 'Does it sound like Anna?' and 'Does it accurately convey the mood of her classroom?' (Muchmore, 2002) and are reminiscent of the notion of *authenticity*, which in

certain sociological approaches supplants the goal of truth (Denzin, 1989, p.55). If authenticity is defined as 'truth to oneself', the other side of the coin is *plausibility* (Levy, 1981, cited in Mishler, 1986), which implies an external judge to be convinced. Denzin identifies a number of different standards which may be applied to autobiographies (and so presumably to other narrative accounts), including sincerity, subjective truth and historical truth, of which only the last is fully open to external validation (Denzin, 1989, p.23). Muchmore (2001) does not aspire to represent an 'objective reality', preferring to gauge the truth of his account by the extent to which new data matches a 'subjective reality' negotiated between himself and his subject over a long period. Moreover, in any circumstances, it is inappropriate to apply tests of truth to subjects' feelings and emotions (Whyte, 1982, cited by Woods, 1985).

The present study takes an interpretive approach, focusing on the particular and seeking thereby to expand the understanding of wider phenomena through the exploration of the subjective, it may still provide illumination beyond the bounds of its immediate subject (Spector-Mersel, 2010).

Often in qualitative research methodologies, corroboration by other forms of evidence is sought. These might include lesson plans and other documents written by the participant, published accounts of their activities (Muchmore, 2001) and field notes (Woods, 1985). Some additional evidence has been available in the substantive phase, including brief notes to accompany each interview, writings published on-line (Paul, Andy, Philippa) or in print (Andy, Elizabeth) and one lesson observation (Claire) and though not often explicitly referred to in the analysis these sources have helped confirm some impressions gained in the interviews.

In conversation, forms of bias are to be expected and unlike in studies which aim to elicit objectively verifiable information, here there is no need to guard against it. An essential feature of any dialogue, even those characterised as conversations between friends, is *facework*, verbal strategies through which each participant protects their own standing and that of their conversational partner (Maybin, 1996). Given that the majority of teachers feel 'deeply uncertain and anxious' about their work (Goodson, 1991, p.141), it is hardly surprising if they choose to present their experiences in a way which shows them in a favourable light. In an interview, responses may be motivated by ulterior motives (e.g. desire for promotion or to work off bad feeling), a desire to please or find favour with the researcher; or 'idiosyncratic factors' (Whyte, 1982, cited by Woods, 1985) may all be interpreted as 'bias' while in reality being elements in the construction of the identity in question. Similarly when participants filter their account of past events through current perceptions (Woods, 1985) (and there is certainly a risk of that occurring where teachers talk about their own education) it does not give rise to a concern that their account is not 'true' but rather, offers a valuable source of data. Gaps and inconsistencies within an account similarly present information, and within an enquiry, additional opportunities for exploration.

Concern about bias may of course equally relate to the researcher and this has been advanced as a reason against building the intersubjectivity through a large number of interviews as the participant may infer (both from what is said and from unspoken clues) and then say what they feel the researcher wants to hear (MacLure, 1988). This study does however, in keeping with a social-constructivist perspective, consider its data to be the result of intersubjectivity, casting the interviewer as a co-creator of knowledge rather than simply a gatherer of it.

The researcher's strong personal interest in a subject (as in *e.g.* Paget, 1983) may be mistrusted as a source of preconceptions, but it can promote valuable insights in the course of interpretation of data. For the sake of the reader this is another reason for the researcher to set out their past experience of the subject of the research, as I have done in Chapter 1.

'Participant bias' (Tuckman and Harper, 2012, p.132) -the presentation of information in a particular way in order that it be understood and reflect on the speaker favourably- is, therefore, not seen as a distortion of the data but as part of the data, often evidence of positioning (Wortham, 2001) which in turn is part of identity construction. Part of the interpretation of the data is the identification of positioning moves within the narrative and offering plausible explanations that contribute to the understanding of the narrative. For their part, gaps and inconsistencies may be construed as an inevitable feature of a self in part constructed through the different choices (*e.g.* interview responses) a person may make according to context (Stronach, 1988). Within a narrative study, like evidence of positioning, they represent rich data for interpretation.

Ethical considerations

Researchers have no automatic right to research the individuals they choose to study, and these people must therefore be persuaded of the work's value, both to education in general and to themselves personally (Muchmore, 2002; Woods, 1985; Oates, 2006). They must also be persuaded that that the research will not in any way cause them harm. In a study like the present one, potential risks include distress, offence or even psychological harm, damage to professional and personal reputation or inconvenience and waste of time (Oates, 2006). The principle of informed consent (BERA, 2011) entails an understanding on the part of

participants of the purpose of the study, how their data will be used and any risks to which they might be exposed.

Participants make a significant personal investment and undertake considerable personal risks when they are asked to reflect on aspects of their life and career, especially if (as at least one of the participants in the substantive phase did) they are moved to consider the very meaning and success of their life (MacLure, 1988). Life history interviews have the potential to bring people to consider aspects of their life and career, perhaps more closely than they have done before, and it is conceivable that insensitive questioning could cause distress or in extreme circumstances, psychological damage; several of the participants have expressed surprise at the depth of reflection stimulated by the interviews. Apart from the obvious protection provided by my not persisting with any uncomfortable line of questioning, two more transparent strategies were used. First the interview questions were shared with participants before the event, and secondly it was made clear that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any point (BERA 2011).

Researchers must have regard for participants' professional and personal reputations and have a moral responsibility to represent them and the events and practices they recount fairly and accurately, thereby protecting them from any harm which might arise out of the work's publication, however small the audience. Unlike the case of large quantitative studies, where the responses of numerous individuals are presented as nameless statistics, life history and narrative studies have the power to render their participants exposed and vulnerable. The publication of any account has potential to cause offence, whether to the research participant or to their colleagues, students, parents or others whose role or actions

may, implicitly or explicitly, have been described, referred to or criticised. Professional or public relations may be threatened, even if there is no misrepresentation.

Anonymisation is a convention of qualitative research, designed to protect the respondent from any criticism which might follow the publication of controversial views, personal revelations or even the detail of their professional practice. This protection is often seen as particularly important to professionals such as teachers. Anonymity arguably has the power to enhance the quality of the data. Without such protection participants might choose to withhold information they are happy to share anonymously, while in the analysis the researcher may feel constrained in their comments for fear of causing professional damage. In this study, the fact that each individual analysis is shared with the participants means that the risk of personal offence remains, but this is further motivation to be completely fair and accurate.

However, anonymity has been described as a 'troubling issue throughout an enquiry' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.174) and whilst the Guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) considers anonymity of data to be 'the norm for the conduct of research', they also acknowledge participants' 'right to be identified [...] if they so wish (BERA, 2011, p.7)

The convention has been called into question because it risks undermining the principle of collaboration between the researcher and the participants in a study, and gives the latter no credit for their significant contribution to the final text (Schulz, 1997, cited in Muchmore, 2002). It may simply frustrate a participant who is proud to be identified with a study (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In some studies, participants have been credited as authors

(e.g. Butt et al, 1992). The solution of leaving to the participant personally the decision as to whether to be named (Muchmore, 2002) is appealing, but relies on all the participants being of the same mind.

On a practical level, perfect anonymity is difficult to achieve, as the identity of individuals and institutions can often be worked out, especially since the advent of internet searching, thanks to details provided in the study.

In research that takes place over a period of time, participants may change their mind (in either direction) over whether they wish to be named (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In the present study, with a single interview planned for each participant, that problem does not arise, but there is a potential issue of consistency between participants. Three of the participants in the substantive phase of this study were in post at the time of their interview, so anonymisation was essential to guard against any risk to their professional standing. I have not only referred to them by pseudonyms but also given only general details of the institutions in which they work or have worked or studied. I also do not cite directly any of their published writings, as they would be susceptible to web searching.

The two other participants both told me of their own accord that they would be happy to be named, but for the sake of consistency I anonymised their data in the same way I did for the three serving teachers, with a sole and similar exception in each case, namely that I named the university they attended, in one case Cambridge, the other The Open University. I felt that the distinctive character of each institution had a role in the life history of the individuals and although this information might make it more possible to identify them that

the risk was worth taking. In fact in one case I'm sure that renaming the institution would have caused a small degree of offence.

As well as keeping participants informed of the use to which their data is put, the process of sharing drafts and analyses right up to the point of publication (Woods, 1985; Muchmore, 2002) helps minimise the risks of publishing something they would not endorse. It has even been argued that participants should have the right to veto publication (Goodson, 1992). As already explained, I have shared first drafts of 'their' chapter with each of the participants and incorporated their comments wherever possible. In a few cases where I have found the comments questionable I have discussed them within the final text in as open a way as I could manage and made the participant's position on the matter clear. It is my intention to give participants access to the complete text of the final thesis.

Unfortunately, in an interpretive methodology, the final interpretation does not belong to the researcher but to the reader. However carefully an account is written, there is no protection against differing interpretations by differing readers, and also by subsequent researchers who may use the text in a partial way to their own ends (MacLure, 1988; Muchmore, 2002). The only protection against this is to make the text clear and unambiguous, in so far as that is ever possible.

The third category of 'harm' considered above is 'inconvenience and waste of time'. While these may seem relatively unimportant, no teacher's time should be taken lightly. As already noted, most participants have indicated that they found their interview stimulating or enjoyable, and all the substantive phase participants have seen their words become the

basis of considerable consequent writing. Only a few extracts from the pilot phase interviews are used in this thesis, but as outlined earlier in this chapter they have contributed significantly to the form of the methodology.

4

Andy

'I can't think of a more useful thing to do, or a more positive thing to do than to sit down and write a poem'

Andy began his teaching career in the early 1970s as a primary class teacher and finally left the classroom in the mid-1990s after several years' working part-time as a teacher of children with special educational needs. He has, for the past twenty years made his living as a children's author and poet, for part of that time also looking after his two, now grown-up children. He still regularly presents his work to audiences of children in their primary schools, but does not lead any activities, such as poetry workshops, which could be described as teaching.

Poetry, writing and storytelling have been of central importance to Andy throughout his life and he is a Cambridge English Literature graduate.

Andy presented as very relaxed and willing to talk about his life experiences and reflect on his writing and teaching. It seemed that he had already given quite a lot of thought to many of the topics discussed. He spoke at length on many topics; in his words, 'You ask me a question, I give you a novel'.

Because Andy's first interview was conducted before I had finalised the schedule, I needed to return to carry out a second interview some time later. For these two reasons, the interview data for this participant is greater than for any other. Each interview took place in Andy's home and lasted around two hours.

Andy was happy to endorse the first draft of this chapter though admitted that he found parts of it 'unsettling'. In particular he feared that in places his desire to give a full and honest answer may not have shown him in the best possible light. He made detailed comments on the draft, either to give supporting information or to clarify misunderstandings.

Introduction

This and the next four chapters explore individually the identities of five past or present teachers with a specialist commitment to writing, interviewed for the substantive phase of the study, using an open and narrative-focused methodology to explore the relationship between individuals' writing and teaching identities. The five writer-teachers who are the subject of these chapters are all quite different from each other and, as it emerged from the interviews, the relative importance to each of their writer and teacher identities was an important variable. The accounts begin with Andy, who, as will be seen, has through his life, almost always accorded greater importance to his writing than his teaching.

Andy's writer identity

Andy has a very strong and frequently expressed or implied sense of himself as a writer. He readily agrees that he is someone who 'always knew he was a writer' and admits to aspirations to be a writer from an early age. It is very clear from the way he consistently talks about himself that he thinks of himself not simply as a writer but in particular as a poet. He affirms a deep commitment to reading as well as writing, and to all aspects of the academic subject area of English, a commitment which dates back to his prep school days.

The influence of great writers on him is evident, with many explicit and implicit references made throughout both interviews and it appears very important to him that he has ‘tasted and absorbed [...] a very sort of high-level register of literary education’.

Early experiences

Andy has no memory of having been taught to read at school, but rather thinks that he probably picked up the skill ‘by osmosis’. He has few family memories of learning to read and write, a fact he attributes to his difficult family circumstances. Having a soldier father meant frequently relocating from country to country (he started school in Germany and moved to Hong Kong at the age of seven, having lived in a number of different countries before that) and throughout his childhood his mother suffered serious, long-term mental health problems.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, and certainly not uncommonly at that time (the 1950s), the family, did not have many books at home and he struggles to remember whether his mother read to him at all, though as Andy points out, this was a period when the potential for parents to encourage their children’s literacy much less well understood and relatively few books were published for children.

Despite this apparently unpromising background, Andy learnt to read at an age young enough to surprise and impress. He recalls an episode from his days attending a school for servicemen’s children in Hong Kong when his brother boasted to the soldier supervising their school bus that the seven-year old Andy could read the newspaper and being called on (successfully) to prove it.

Andy credits school rather than home with initially stimulating his interest in literacy. His 'first recollection of actually being involved with poetry and writing' comes from the time he was, because of his family circumstances, sent away to a boarding prep school. Despite the overall prep school experience being in many ways an unhappy one, all Andy's memories of writing and literature from this time seem to be happy and positive, with English lessons led by teachers he describes as 'warm and affectionate'. It helped that he had been identified as 'quite good at English' and so was 'perceived in a positive light'. In his turbulent life he found his English lessons were 'a little temporary oasis' or a 'warm bath'.

At school, his talent was soon recognised by his peers and teachers, who would sometimes read his stories aloud. At this time, he discovered in himself, through a very traditional curriculum featuring 'quite jingoistic or quite traditional poems', a natural facility for appreciating poetry and learning it by heart. He says that he was helped from the very start by a natural ability to understand technical features such as rhyme, rhythm and metre.

He seems very happy to embrace the traditional canon, and while Silas Marner proved taxing for a nine-year old, he was particularly excited by adventure stories such as John Buchan's Prester John. At the age of nine or ten he began researching history textbooks as the basis of his own 'sort of novelette about the Black Prince'. The subject matter of these works reflects the traditional nature of his reading in school and foreshadows the link between writing and scholarship which is part of his later conception of writing. He links his output at this time to a conscious sense of himself as a reader and a writer.

His gift for composition was extended through oral storytelling after lights out. This practice was tolerated by the school and Andy developed a specialism in spy and adventure stories. Evidence that he felt comfortable with the culture of English at his prep school is to be found

in his maintenance of the school's ornate handwriting style right up until he began work as a teacher.

At the age of eleven, Andy moved on to a boarding grammar school where again he was encouraged in his attempts at stories and poems and 'under that influence' he would, in the holidays, compose poems in his head, after he had gone to bed.

Although he has particularly warm feelings for those English teachers who were enthusiastic to share their love of literature, he had no affection for any teacher who reduced the subject to 'deadly dull' and 'boring' exercises. He singles out two teachers in particular to whom he says he had 'the equivalent of a religious aversion'. He remembers feeling:

'How dare they come into this sacred area of English and writing and poetry with their [...], cabin-cribbed confined ideas about writing [...], I felt that they were infiltrators and they shouldn't be allowed to teach English'

At this age, for Andy, English was a 'sacred area', and this almost obsessive devotion to the subject, and to the canon of world literature, continued at least into his early adulthood.

This familiarity with a literary canon, and the experience of an intense formal education in English literature appear to be very important factors in Andy's self-image as a writer. Probably more than any of the other participants, the way he sees himself seems to be affected by his own educational experiences and how, from time to time he has been judged. He sees his offer of an undergraduate place at Cambridge, achieved without post- A level study, as an 'endorsement' of his academic achievements.

However, as he is keen to point out, his boarding education was not a private education, but funded publicly because of his family's circumstances, and he says that his 'lower middle

class uncultured background' led to his feeling something of an outsider at Cambridge. Perhaps thanks to a personal 'lack of self esteem' he felt somewhat intimidated by the scholarship of his tutors, one of whom he describes as 'the most erudite poet in the English language in the later 20th century' as well as by some of his fellow students

'...you're the sort of brightest spark in your school and you turn up thinking you're the bee's knees and then you instantly meet three or four people in your college who just, you know you can't believe anybody can be that clever or that well read.'

Despite being, in his own words, a 'perfectly capable' student Andy graduated with a disappointing (though in those days, not uncommon) lower second class degree, thanks to what he describes as 'really a very serious breakdown' in his second year. This was of significant consequence, as it put an end to his ambition to become a 'scholar poet', someone who both studied and taught poetry in a university and wrote poetry of his own. Moreover, the number of times and variety of ways he found to assert or imply that the classification misrepresented his capabilities gave me the impression that the judgment was painful at a personal level. (In fact this sentence in the first draft provoked another piece of detailed self justification, finally leavened by the realisation, 'But I'm still banging on about it, aren't I?') He is clearly proud of his achievements when studying at a very high level, and would like them to be recognised alongside his record of publication for children, to which he believes his literary education has contributed.

After graduation, Andy continued to read copiously and systematically. At the beginning of his teaching career, whilst living alone in a bedsit, he spent a great deal of his time in solitary reading, partly motivated by a sense that he had not read enough at university or had perhaps missed out on certain types of book. For a time, for example, he dedicated himself to reading Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and other Russian novelists.

Being a writer

Andy has clearly given a lot of thought to what it means to be a writer. Time and again he returns to his understanding of the essential qualities of a writer as someone whose overriding interest is in the creation of text.

'the choice to be a writer is a very specific thing, you'd be a fool to take it on if you weren't somehow motivated to actually create text in some form'

This interest is focused solely on language, not on any extrinsic reward:

'... the best wording for me is, your desire trails are all linked in with words and language and so in a sense to actually write a good poem is [...] deeply satisfying even though it may never get published or earn you any money.'

To say that a writer is someone concerned with the creation of text may seem to be a truism, but other motivations, as diverse as a desire to teach communicate or express oneself, to perform, to appear clever or to get rich are all possible. Mostly Andy sticks to his purely aesthetic conception of what motivates writers, and in the second interview he extends the argument to include the act of writing too.

'...the idea of sitting down to write, I can't think of a more useful thing to do, or a more positive thing to do than to sit down and write a poem'

This is certainly not about expression. He does not say writers are driven to express meaning (or themselves) through text, but rather to create text for its own sake. He explicitly rejects the notion that a writer begins with something to say and then constructs the text accordingly; rather, meaning may (or may not) emerge through the creation of the text.

'because I'm a poet I think of writing as making rather than saying, the saying is almost secondary to the making, and I often think writers don't have anything to say which is possibly why they write, to try and come up with something'

In a later clarification he says that he refuses to see a separation between form and meaning: that meaning emerges with form and that form does not arise from pre-existing meaning.

Meaning must eventually figure, since the writer is 'really [...] trying to make something beautiful and true' and truth is meaningful. And beyond the purely aesthetic desire 'to do the best that words can do', there is some sense of audience in the aspiration to '*show people* (my italics) the best that words can do'. Andy identifies a role for writers in setting this linguistic excellence to work in contributing to the develop language itself thereby impacting on the wider culture. He is tempted to take this theme further to include responsibility for preserving the language and protecting it from change, but after some consideration decides 'it's probably best a dog that's left to run wild actually'.

He dismisses the claims of those (he cites Dr Johnson) who say that writers are motivated solely by money, arguing that there are many ways to make money, and that writers have chosen writing over all the alternatives. He also insists that a writer's capacities are not honed in pursuit of status or a desire to demonstrate one's superiority over those less gifted. Rather, he sees writing as a solitary pursuit and something done 'in the spirit of quiet application'.

But perhaps that characterisation of writing is really Andy talking about his own motivation, as he does concede later in the interview that some writers, at least, are motivated by a drive to perform (and by implication gain the attention, and probably the approbation) of an audience.

'... you only have to read Roald Dahl to see what a performer a writer can be you know, his nose is almost coming out of the page a lot of the time

Audience

Although he does not identify audience as something important to him, references to audience, from his earliest memory of reading for the purpose of impressing a soldier on his school bus, recur throughout Andy's account of his literary life. His 'first stimuli' involve hearing his early school writing read aloud by his teacher or reading it out himself. From his account of story telling after lights out, there seems little doubt that the approval of his audience was a motivating factor.

Andy admits that being a writer who has not found an audience (implicitly, who is not published) is a 'problematic' state of affairs. Before his own work was published he 'felt [he] was a writer by nature who couldn't somehow find his groove or channel or rut'. A writer, without doubt, but also in some respect an outsider in the literary world. In his comments on this chapter, Andy points out that many well-regarded poets of his generation were unpublished or self-published and there was a prevailing opinion that the mainstream poetry taken up by big publishers was not 'the most forward moving'. Having said that, he admits that he did not belong to a 'coterie' so 'the outsider label sticks'.

At Cambridge he talks about writing to 'impress or [...] compete with your tutors'. He also considers the possibility that writers, because their function is to represent aspects of the world (which usually entails an audience to represent the world to), are in fact 'by their very nature, inherently teachers'.

The importance of audience to Andy is difficult to pin down. It is clearly a matter to which he has given a lot of thought over the years, but for decades he was sufficiently motivated to continue to write without any audience at all. In his words, he 'could never find anybody to acknowledge the value or worth' of his work and that he 'could never find a place where the writing I was doing as an adult poet kind of belonged', implying that he would have been happy to have an audience and may even to some extent have been looking for one. There is no indication, however, that he felt the need to change his writing so that a place could be more easily found for it.

Only when he began working in the field of children's poetry did Andy begin to find recognition from publishers and a reading public, an eventuality he describes as the 'first positive feedback' of his adult life. Now, with twenty years of regular publication behind him he feels able to describe himself as someone 'with some kind of acknowledgement or status or profile in the children book world', someone who has had 'good reviews [and] some prizes'. Despite this significant degree of success and recognition in the world of children's literature, he still finds it a 'quite a struggle' to get his work published, and regrets that for commercial reasons it is not, in his judgment, always his best work that reaches the market place.

While Andy clearly enjoys and is motivated by having an appreciative audience for his work, he has also, throughout his life, continued to write for adults, despite his poems' being largely unread. However, in keeping with his professed view that text is all, it seems to be the work itself which is his main interest. He still refers to himself as having 'no status whatsoever as an adult poet', but thanks to technology he is now able to offer his adult poetry to a wider audience via his own website.

Some of his comments on computer use suggest that the value of publication may not even lie completely in finding an audience at all, but rather in the aesthetic matter of presenting the words in as perfect a form as possible.

'In a way I suppose it's a bit like an easy way of being published [...] I can remember when I first wrote on a computer thinking 'wow!' you know, I'm published straight away.'

Being a children's writer

Although all his commercially published work is for children, Andy never set out to be a writer for children. His intention was simply to be a poet, writing for an adult audience and it was many years before it occurred to him to write for children. Unusually for the writer-teachers in this study, he has no childhood memories of enjoying literature specifically written for children, referring wryly to 'a great paucity of Robert Louis Stevenson in my own childhood'. In fact he remembers getting to know 'that corpus of work' in his twenties, when he talks of 'researching' it, rather than enjoying, or even, simply, reading it. Perhaps this perspective gives him a critical distance not enjoyed by others.

With hindsight he can see how his life experiences led him into this particular field of writing. He lists these as his acquisition of an extensive and critical knowledge of literature, his work as teacher (both with a class and one-to-one with children with special educational needs) and caring for his own two children. However, he stresses that the outcome was never planned.

He relates that it was not his experience as a teacher, but that of reading to his own daughter and son, which gave him the decisive push towards writing poetry for children, at first purely for enjoyment within the family. In time, however, he began to make

comparisons between these poems and those in published books and began to feel that his own work was just as good. So, eventually successfully, he sought to publish commercially. In the first draft of this chapter I speculated as to whether Andy was motivated to publish simply because he believed in the quality of his texts, that they met established standards, or because he had seen the possibility of reaching a newly identified audience. In his comments, Andy says:

'As I was turning 40 there was beginning to be a hunger for some kind of acknowledgement of my literary talents and abilities. I did want to make a mark by then.'

As a form of motivation it has something in common with his undergraduate desire to impress his tutors.

Early in the interview, Andy said that he had, as a young man, expected to follow the advice of one of the poets he admired and take an undemanding job as a post office clerk in order to support his writing. In the first draft, I wondered whether, by providing an increasingly solid source of income, writing for children had taken the place of 'the job in the Post Office', as a means of supporting his *real* work, for adults. While conceding that point, Andy insists that he is nonetheless fully committed to his work for children:

'Yes, but a lot of my children's writing, the poems for children and the verse picture books, have really brought me joy and writerly engagement.'

He makes the additional point that he somewhat resents the way in which 'adult' poets' occasional work for a younger audience gets more acknowledgement than his. He seems especially to resent the implication that writing for children is an 'easy option', describing himself as, 'a real poet who has specialised in that zone.' Writing for children is real writing.

Andy's teacher identity

Being a teacher

Whereas Andy presents himself as a lifelong writer, his teaching career spans a much shorter period of time, and teaching is not something to which, prior to entering the profession, he had intended to dedicate himself. He declares that at the outset of his teaching career he had been, 'by intention a poet, and a writer'. When his ambition to become a 'scholar poet' became impossible to realise, and perhaps remembering the words of one of his own grammar school teachers who had told him 'these days most poets tended to either be dons or (back then) grammar school English teachers', Andy chose to train as a secondary English teacher.

Thanks to his own school experience of English lessons as 'pleasant ... pleasurable ... nurturing ...nourishing' and of his teachers as 'warm and affectionate, kind, generous, creative, original, enthusiastic, eccentric' (the last in a way of which he obviously approves) and in at least one case 'inspirational' he no doubt expected to find teaching in a secondary school to be a similarly positive experience. However, as an adult, he found the environment unattractive, with 'not very nice' teenagers creating an 'unpleasant atmosphere'.

Fortunately his teacher training had brought him, for the first time in his life, into contact with state primary education. He found the primary school environment to be both attractive and stimulating and soon found himself a post in a village primary school.

'...primary schools, particularly in the 70s, I thought this is joyous. Some quite nice teachers and the kids, you know, most of the kids are fabulous'

His view of himself quickly changed, with the primary teacher identity becoming dominant.

'I thought of myself as, initially, an English teacher and then, actually, a Primary school teacher, who would in his spare time be a poet...'

He seems a little troubled by the public perception of primary education as 'low level' and 'low status', especially for one who has 'tasted and absorbed [a] high level register of literary education', but concludes that it was 'one of the most interesting areas to work in and considered working in the field to be 'very laudable'.

As a teacher, Andy seems to have been motivated by the positive response to his innovative approaches, in terms both of the high quality of children's work and of the approbation of colleagues and parents.

'...actually getting quite a lot of reward and some acknowledgement, [...] from other teachers or headteachers or parents that [...] you were getting children to create quite [...] fine pieces of work...'

Sometimes Andy appears to cast himself again as something of an outsider: an English teacher among primary teachers, not trained as a primary teacher and with a strong sense of difference in terms of educational hinterland, claiming 'a much clearer grasp [than colleagues] of what, say, poetry could be'. However, despite this and despite his very decision to teach being apparently *faute de mieux*, Andy's account of his years in the profession indicate a great deal of commitment to his pupils, to education and to the primary phase in particular. Having read the first draft of this chapter, he reflected on teaching:

'It's a vast part of my life, I realise, and incredibly formative in many respects, in the way one's life can continue to be formative well through adulthood. Je ne regrette rien.'

Practice

One of the particular attractions of primary education for Andy at that time (the early 1970s) was the potential it offered for teachers to develop their own interests through their teaching. It was a period of educational history, he felt, when creativity was integral to practice.

Although Andy's allegiance had shifted to the primary sector, it remained with English as a subject area and as well as providing a strong specialism to his teaching, he felt that his knowledge of literature set him somewhat apart from his colleagues. He felt that this difference gave him an advantage as a teacher.

'I definitely had the sense that those people around me [...] didn't really have a very strong grasp on [...], the teaching of language and English and writing and literature'

One effect of his literary expertise was that he felt equipped to present routine areas of the curriculum in relatively creative ways. He gives the example of meeting a team-determined requirement to teach the mechanics of letter writing by asking his class to write 'a letter to a scientist to ask for an antidote to the sort of shrinking thing that one of them accidentally swallowed'. This was done not simply to exercise Andy's creative powers, but because children would find the activity more purposeful and engaging than a less imaginative exercise.

Andy's account of his class teaching shows how he used the primary teacher's continuing relationship with a single group of children to develop a classroom culture founded not only on a love of literature, but also on collaborative social practices. His pupils could expect any activity to be given a literary dimension. Every morning would end with a poem, every afternoon with the next instalment of a story. Andy would often read to his class as they concentrated on drawing or some other form of artwork. Handwriting exercises would be

‘something playful and interesting’, often built around a rhyme. He saw exposure to ‘good, dramatic reading out loud’ as a way of facilitating access to stories and poems for those children who had difficulty with the technical aspects of reading.

Where other teachers might develop a particular theme through art, science or another subject area, Andy would focus on writing.

‘I remember sitting round with them saying you know let’s well, you know with Mr Chapman you know we’d be drawing these [chestnut leaves] or painting them or using.. but we’re going to try and [...] think about them and write about them.’

Andy described the ‘chestnut leaves’ lesson in some detail revealing a sensory approach to creative writing, of a kind familiar in English primary schools at the time (Harpin, 1986). Having asked the children to look carefully at the shapes of the leaves and think about what they reminded them of, he set them to writing acrostics. He still remembers the poem written by one girl whom he had not been expecting to produce anything so impressive.

*‘Leaves falling on the ground
Early in autumn
A girl picks one up and says
“Fingertips. That is what you look like.”’*

One of the noticeable features of this lesson was the amount of time given to working together as a whole class group to prepare for the writing task and this is something Andy sees as typical of his way of working. Writing lessons would commonly begin with the class sitting around a small whiteboard, beginning to create a story. The first function of this was collectively to generate ideas, words and phrases, some of which he would promote verbally or by underlining them. As the text began to grow, he would encourage revisions, for example to make it feel ‘smoother’.

As well as promoting the free generation and acknowledgement of ideas then, Andy used the activity to show the plasticity of the medium: what is written can be changed. He felt it important that the children gained a sense that even though words are written they are not permanent.

'... writing [is] like clay modelling [...] it can be worked at [...] you begin you change it, you drop it you don't finish it, you start again or you redo it or you take a bit out or you cut it to bits and move it round or ...

This kind of reworking he saw as something undertaken collectively, 'getting everyone together and knocking it about'.

He suspects that the length of time his class spent on collective drafting (maybe three quarters of an hour) would have been challenged by 'some people' (presumably this includes some teachers) and he does recall children sometimes being concerned that they had spent so long without having 'done any work'. His response to this is to justify the collective thinking and shaping as work, just as much as the eventual individual writing would be.

'Just because you don't feel tired and bored and your hand's not aching doesn't mean you haven't worked. If you've been joining in, you've been thinking and until you've done the thinking there's no point in picking up your pen'

Following the intense period of joint composition, Andy's class would be expected to write in strictly enforced silence for a period. He found children to be very happy to work in this way, preferring it to a noisy, disturbing classroom. At the end of a lesson, or sequence of lessons, Andy would use the classroom as a forum for sharing completed work.

This account of Andy's teaching certainly gives the impression of a teacher-led, if not a teacher-centred approach. Elsewhere, however, Andy shows himself to be sensitive to the

learning needs of individuals. On several occasions, he refers to the need to establish the level of learners' existing knowledge in order to decide how and what to teach them. He insists that the idea of 'failure' should not play any part in children's learning; identifying something a child cannot yet do gave him, as a teacher, a 'point of departure', requiring him to establish what it is that the child must learn before s/he is ready to tackle this new piece of knowledge or skill. In particular respect of writing, Andy does not take any knowledge for granted, citing the example of story structure as something unfamiliar to many children. In the final analysis, he feels that it is the teacher's job to ensure that children know enough to enable them to begin writing.

Some of the things Andy says about the place of spontaneity may give the impression that he favours a view of writing as founded on inspiration rather than personal application. His stated view, however, is that both he and the children he has taught have been able to develop as writers as a result of their experience of a literate culture and of the efforts they have made in school and other educational settings. In his own classroom, he attributes success in writing to a workmanlike approach, since it is 'not something you're just good at and it happens'. Within his classroom, success is open to all (though perhaps not at the highest level), at very least through participating at a group level.

Over the course of his teaching career, Andy came increasingly to see that children are often able to achieve beyond their expectations, and that it is the teacher's role to help them bridge this gap. In this context he talks about 'facilitating' learning and 'empowering' children.

As a class teacher, Andy nurtured a classroom culture through establishing routines and practices but also through getting to know the learning needs and strengths of all the pupils, recognising that each learner must be treated differently, because each has an individual 'starting point' for learning and understanding. A class is far from being a 'blank and passive receiving audience'. He speaks approvingly of Michael Rosen's work in encouraging children to write in their own voice, though he makes no explicit link between this approach and his own teaching.

As well as acknowledging the importance of each learner's self in the composition of a classroom culture, Andy reflects on the way his own self contributes to that culture. What he brought to the classroom was a mixture of the prescribed and the personal. The personal element he describes as 'a matter of voice' and a means of bringing things to life and was clearly a very important aspect of his teaching:

'My memory of teaching was always very expressive, I felt there was an awful lot of the personal invested in teaching, that certainly the early days of my primary teaching was a bit like being an actor or a performer'

Although he sees the teacher's role in some respects as performer, he is well aware of the danger of the teacher's self being too intrusive when children are working creatively, taking a warning from the example of highly opinionated and prescriptive art-school tutors. This is one of the reasons he gives for choosing not to work directly with children writing when he visits schools in his capacity as poet. He cites the importance of classroom culture, based on mutual familiarity and shared routines and rituals as another reason why he does not offer schools one-off writing activities.

Andy is happy to recognise teachers' responsibility as to teach and direct, and has no truck with *laissez faire* approaches, decrying a tendency he believes to have been influential

shortly before he began teaching to disregard spelling and grammar in the name of 'free creative writing'. In his opinion, this amounted to little more than 'reams of [...] gibberish, occasional chunks of which might be very inspired'.

Despite being able to articulate in detail his approach to teaching writing, Andy also expresses a degree of doubt that writing is something which can be taught at all; it may be something which arises out of the learner's membership of a literate culture.

'...there's a bit of me that feels I don't know if it's possible to teach very much how to write a poem or a story, [...] but as I reflect on it I think well I've become a writer across my lifetime in some sense, some form, and how have I done that and is it because of, or in spite of, or a mixture of the two, of my educational experience, or is it actually more to do with simply existing as a reader, a writer within a culture...'

His advice for aspiring writers is to read a lot and then 'find your writers to emulate'; there is no acknowledgement of a role for school and it suggests a view that only a minority of people become 'real' writers.

Andy reconciles his conflicting feelings about the extent to which children can be helped to write better by teachers by making a distinction between 'teaching', and 'helping them to learn'. This distinction seems to be about the difference between a teacher 'teaching' by insisting on her/his way of creating being the only way possible (with little hope of success) or 'helping them learn' by giving the learner the licence to create in her/his own way. In this context, teaching entails 'forcing' while facilitation is achieved through, for example, reading to children.

'I mean at one extreme you have well here's the space, the desk, here's the paper, here's the pencil it's all yours and far be it from me to make any criticism, and then on the other hand the thing of well you know you want to write well here's how I do it and I can only teach you to do it in my way.'

This appears to jar somewhat with his description of lessons in which he clearly takes a hegemonic role in the joint creative endeavour of writing. However, the distinction appears to be one of learner agency, and his contention that 'real writing is motivated' seems to confirm that interpretation. It is worth noting that Andy's own stated position is a long way from 'here's the pencil, it's all yours'. It may also be at the heart of his passionately expressed objection to the way he sees redrafting used in the process approach to teaching writing.

'you know the dreaded drafting, [...] children were starting to be taught that writing is not a simple matter and you can't just do it once and you think you've written a story or a poem but actually if you were a real writer you would go back to it again and again, and the poor child would be thinking, 'How many times do I have to go back to this thing before it's a real piece of writing?'

As a teacher, Andy felt the requirement to rework whole drafts too demanding for children and that they would be demotivated, especially if they felt the work was finished. In his view the approach also risked robbing composition of its openness to inspiration and spontaneity by reducing writing to a routine or 'business-like' activity.

He is not opposed to using redrafting *per se* in his teaching; he himself uses the 'clay modelling' analogy noted earlier and talks enthusiastically about classes revising texts as they compose them. Rather he seems averse to a process which is both onerous and formulaic and only necessitated by what he sees as a lax approach to early drafting, which can lead to pages of 'chaotic nonsense'.

His preference is to set highly focused tasks through which young writers mentally sharpen their ideas and words before committing them to paper. He gives the example of asking a

class to write 'the first sentence of a book [...] or the first paragraph' or 'five really good sentences that open the door.'

Subject knowledge

As already noted, it is Andy's belief that his advanced study of English literature was a considerable support to his effectiveness as a teacher. Throughout his career he seems to have taken quite a cerebral approach to professional development, with his reading often having a bearing on his teaching. He cites the work of Kenneth Koch on teaching poetry, for example (e.g. Koch, 1970).

As already noted, his earliest reading of children's literature was done in the name of 'research' and at various points in his career he was motivated to investigate more deeply the areas in which he was teaching. Work in Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7 years) stimulated research into language acquisition and further exploration of children's literature; work with readers experiencing difficulties inspired theoretical reading in the field of literacy learning.

Although it is clear that this kind of reading, along with earlier scholarship, directly contributed to the ways in which he worked with children, Andy is aware that there is also a degree of incongruence in respect of his own facility with language and composition and the problems and difficulties of the young children (and especially those with SEN) with whom he worked.

'one's actually working with children who have difficulties, strange irony by which somebody who's basically very literary or literate or a poet and all about words and language and who is naturally really quite sort of you know kind of lexically geared er working with children who have obstacles of problems with that...'

He says he found the experience 'strangely therapeutic' and compares himself to a dancer teaching disabled people how to walk.

Andy's writer-teacher identity

Writing and teaching

At several points in the interviews, Andy reflects on ways in which writing and teaching are similar activities: at the simplest level, both writers and teachers work to express or construct a meaning. He argues at different times both that writers may teach through expressing and conveying information in a way which the reader finds accessible and that any well-written text is a lesson in the sense that its features and characteristics can be reproduced by another, apprentice, writer.

Although he articulates his own sophisticated pedagogy and gives examples of its success, he also speculates that in conventional terms the skill of writing may be something which simply cannot be taught and people learn to write only by reading 'the best' literature.

'I think writers teach best by doing their best work and that what is learnt from them is learnt by reading them, incidentally.'

Andy also identifies performance as a quality of both writing and teaching. He sees clear similarities between writing and teaching. In the sense that he was author of all he did, he says ... 'I can fancifully imagine I was writing myself onto the classroom everyday'.

A writer in the classroom

Before the first interview, I had sent Andy a copy of my notes outlining the writer/teacher typology I had developed. That he felt that different categories fitted him at different times of his life and that he sometimes 'secretly inhabited' one category when he might have been expected to fulfil the role of another should not have come as a surprise; any categorisation of human identities, as it attempts to crystallise multi-faceted and ever-changing selves, is likely to be ill-fitting and overgeneralising in respect of most real cases. However, even within the artificial constraints of my typology, it quickly became clear that my assumption that Andy was a 'teacher turned writer' was wrong; his writing identity stretches back into his early childhood, while his involvement in teaching has a much shorter history.

However, although his decision to teach was initially taken because he expected the job to allow him to continue to write, his commitment to the profession grew as he taught. Having identified himself, at the start of his teaching career, as a poet teaching for the money, he soon came to see himself as a teacher 'who would in his spare time be a poet' and it is clear that Andy took his teaching responsibilities seriously from the start. Although at this period he saw himself as teacher first, writer second, he clearly felt that he was, thanks to his literary hinterland, an unusual primary teacher, one with a mission to bring poetry to children in a way other teachers could not. Not surprisingly, his identity as a writer had a role to play in his teaching, with the two identities interacting in a number of ways.

By telling his classes that he 'wrote poems in his spare time', Andy offered himself as a role model, showing children that writing is not just for school and that there are people who enjoy writing. However, in his teaching he also made active use of his skills as a writer,

writing both *for* children and *with* children, composing texts as a class. He saw these activities as 'just part of my teaching work' but acknowledges that they depended on his literary interests and skills.

As a writer, Andy was easily able to create short texts as models for children to imitate. He might show children passages in a notebook before reading them aloud, or copy extracts from his work onto the board before 'getting them to have a go at that'.

In leading a class writing collectively, Andy felt he was channelling his literary creativity and sharing some responsibility for authorship. He recognises this as an example of his creativity feeding directly into teaching, giving him 'a secret life as a writer that was being channelled through the lives and works of children'. Although he speaks in terms of 'getting everyone together' and 'joining in', as the scribe he will have had the final say as to what was actually written. Andy's description of the classroom as 'a sort of creative forum for, in a sense, my personality' reveals the extent to which he feels he was actively engaging in the creative process himself. Andy was hesitant to advance that thought as, in his words, 'I obviously sound like an egomaniac' and indeed one way of interpreting the situation is to see Andy as author and the children playing a minor supporting role - perhaps little more than a patient and sympathetic audience. An alternative, however is to see Andy as a collaborator, bringing his considerable skills to the group but respecting and integrating the skills and thoughts of other members. Without observing one of his classes in action it is impossible to know which of these formulations is closer to the truth. What is certain however, is that after these lengthy collective composition sessions Andy gave his pupils time and space to write individually and here it is certainly the case that he is wary of taking ownership of their texts

away from them. He is well aware that he could easily 'look at a child's poem and take it away from them and write it the way I would want it to be'.

One by-product of writing collectively is that it enabled Andy to demonstrate 'the invisible processes of writing' in particular that texts do not arrive fully formed but develop through their writing. At first the demonstration was unconscious and incidental: it happened because it reflected the way that Andy wrote himself. However, over time he came to realise that children could benefit by imitating his writing behaviour and modelling (the term Andy uses) became a deliberate part of his teaching repertoire. He sees this as a shift from inadvertently presenting a writer identity to consciously demonstrating, through his teacher identity, how writers work. Ultimately he says he 'was a teacher then, rather than a writer' and that his pupils saw him in the same way. In his later comments he adds that he was 'enlisting [his] experiences as a writer for the purposes of [his] teaching'.

His negative reaction to the tenets of process writing may stem from his vantage point as a writer. He rejects the whole notion that writing is a craft, based on a limited set of working practices and the idea that 'a real writer [...] would go back to [a story and poem] again and again'. He is a 'real writer' and he knows that that is far from always how composition works. He talks of 'gifts' - poems which 'come really fast' and are simply 'right first time'. He speculates that maybe, thanks to years of practice, he is 'internally drafting', but it would obviously be alien to his art to revise such a 'gift' because the routine requires it. That is the kind of practice which he surely would associate with the worst kind of highly directive teaching.

He also sees process writing's efforts to establish an author-editor relationship between teacher and pupil as bogus, since he does not believe that teachers will relinquish to the writer their power (authority) over the final product in the way that a real editor will; they are much more likely to claim the role of expert and cast the child as 'an apprentice writer'.

In effect he is challenging process writing's pretensions to establish 'real' (rather than 'school') writing in a school context, with his misgivings intensified by a lack of confidence in some teachers to 'really know[...] how to direct a piece of writing'.

In the classroom, Andy saw himself as a creative person capable of transmuting his literary creativity into creative teaching. His recollection is that he 'poured a lot of my creative energy into [his] teaching' at a period in history when he felt that primary school teaching 'was very potentially creative'. He does however acknowledge that his personal resources were finite and that the time and energy he put into his teaching was not then available for his own writing.

In fact, the simplest interaction between writing and teaching is in the competition for time. Initially, Andy found teaching 'a slightly more leisurely occupation' than it was to become in the course of his classroom career, but even in the early days he found it difficult to make the time, or have the 'creative energy' needed for his own writing, without making the kind of compromises to his professional commitment he clearly found unacceptable. Occasionally he 'tried to back off' from teaching in order to make time to write, but this was never for long periods as he soon felt that he was 'short-changing' his pupils. He concludes that teaching 'absorbed a lot of creative energy'.

As teachers' responsibilities became increasingly prescribed and demanding with the 'reforms' of the early 1990s, Andy came to the conclusion that it was simply not possible to continue in both roles.

'it got to the point really in the 80s' where one thought, you know, being a primary school teacher and a writer are incompatible.'

The requirement to spend significant periods of time on prescribed forms of planning and assessment, in meetings and on other responsibilities in all subjects was not the only contributor to this tension. Andy also talks of a 'rift' created between writers familiar with the classroom (*e.g.* Philip Pullman) and the emerging curriculum.

For a time Andy was able to accommodate his writing by teaching part-time, but as he became increasingly successful and in demand with publishers, schools and libraries he decided to break from teaching altogether and become a full-time writer.

Reflection

Of all the writer-teachers in this study, Andy is arguably the one for whom the balance is tipped most clearly towards a writer identity. Andy was aware of himself as a reader, writer and storyteller from a very early age and his love of poetry goes back almost as far as he can remember, even though (and probably because of his domestic circumstances and early departure for boarding school), he has few memories of enjoying books and stories in his own home. English lessons offered him an important emotional and intellectual haven, and it seems that that the traditional nature of his first formal encounters with literature has left a lifelong mark. Remarkably, even for one schooled in the 1950s, he had very little childhood exposure to literature written expressly for children. It seems unlikely that there would not, at very least have been some age-specific books in his grammar school library, so perhaps there was an element of choice; he clearly loved the grown-up works he encountered.

In the interviews, Andy mentioned particular books and authors far more often than he referred to people he had known and it is difficult to identify any individuals whom he would consider influences. Perhaps the strongest candidate is his university tutor, whose erudition he greatly admired and whom, it seems very likely, he would have attempted to emulate had he been able to follow his ambition to become a 'scholar poet'. He calls one of his grammar school teachers 'inspirational', from his account of him largely because of his heartfelt performance in presenting works of literature in startlingly engaging ways -crawling on his belly to talk about caving, leaping on the desks and bursting into song- and it is possible that in this way he did awaken Andy's interest in particular books or genres. What Andy does not say is that this teacher's influence had any effect when he came to be a teacher himself; his account of his own practice suggests certainly a degree of intensity, and he does talk about his work with his earliest classes having a strong element of 'performance' but he makes no

claim to have offered his pupils anything like the wild eccentricities which he had enjoyed witnessing as a child.

If the interviews had been designed to elicit general early childhood experiences, given the background information offered about his parents and the prep school regime, I would no doubt have heard of childhood events which had a lasting effect on Andy. However, there is little if anything in the two transcripts which might qualify as critical incidents in respect of either writing or of teaching and learning. Indeed, even his 'serious breakdown' although it had material consequences for his career, does not appear to have been responsible for any change in his attitudes, values or behaviour. Perhaps this was because both literature and producing work for English teachers were easy and enjoyable: his early entry to Cambridge shows that he must have been an exceptional scholar. However, I am left with the impression of a writer-identity formed almost entirely by his relationship with books. Maybe this is a true impression, given, because of circumstances, his apparent lack in childhood of close relationships with adults. Perhaps the conscious or unconscious social transition from his 'uncultured lower-middle class background' to life in a Cambridge college was a factor. Or maybe Andy simply chooses to position himself as a 'book-made man'; the reality is likely to be complex.

The impression that at least in his earliest days of Cambridge Andy felt something of a fish out of water is reinforced by the very hesitant way in which he talks about the experience. He was the first in his family to go to university and as well as feeling intellectually overwhelmed, the social business of meeting other poets and finding an informal audience for his work proved an enormous challenge. He seems again to have felt himself something of an outsider as a teacher, thanks to his unusual, literary background and he even makes a

virtue of the outsider status of being an unpublished poet at a time when the published mainstream was not considered (presumably by insiders of another kind) to be the best poetry. Writing, for Andy, is not the social activity it can be for others. He never talks of contact with other writers or of bouncing ideas off others or sharing work in progress. Writing is a solitary activity, largely carried out in the attic of his house, or in some other isolated place; ideas are collected in notebooks and refined by Andy alone.

Whether these qualities add up to isolationism, solipsism, self-reliance or something else, they resonate both with Andy's insistence on the prime importance of the text itself and his perplexing attitude to audience. His life history, including decades of writing 'adult' poetry that nobody at all got to hear or read, does show both a degree of faith in the quality of the poems as well as a dogged lack of interest in audience and notably an unwillingness to consider modifying his work to attract an audience.

But then there are frequent occasions when he expresses pleasure at a degree of recognition: as well as those times mentioned above, in his comments on the first draft of this chapter he shows his pride at the knowledge that his revered former tutor has 'made a point of acquiring my 'major works' for the [college] Library', adding, 'Funnily enough I got real recognition in the end'. Sometimes there seems to be a competitive element in this, or a desire to express high status. Ever since writing became his major occupation he has performed his poetry to audiences of school children, but (outside the interviews) I have heard him dismiss this as 'whoring', something done only for the money.

How Andy's identity as a self-reliant, highly literary writer contributed to his teaching is an interesting question. Enthusiasm for poetry, narrative and other literary forms of writing clearly underpinned a lot of what he did, but I can only speculate as to the origins of the collectively creative approach of his pedagogy. As someone also teaching at that time (and a little later, in the same county) I can say that such approaches were encouraged by initial teacher training (but Andy did not train as a primary teacher) and local authority advisers, as well as being generally 'in the air' (as was a great deal of dull and routine practice based on text book exercises). I also know that the headteacher Andy mentions was one of a small but significant group of heads in the county who, followed by enthusiastic staff, were developing in their schools highly creative curricula, along the lines advocated by the likes of Sybil Marshall (*e.g.* Marshall, 1963). All Andy actually says on the subject is that the school (and the zeitgeist) allowed him to base his teaching on his own interests. It certainly appears that he was influenced more by colleagues in his own and other schools than by his own childhood teachers, who seemed, at their best, to be impressive performers rather than facilitators and supporters of children's own writing efforts. This is something on which a third interview might have found more firm evidence. Whatever the shaping influences, it is clear from all he says that Andy took his teaching responsibilities very seriously and that for a significant part of his life it took over from writing as his primary activity.

Like a number of other participants, Andy says he has found taking part in this research a positive experience; he calls it 'instructive, reflective [...] interesting, useful and more'. Unlike others, and perhaps because of his age (he reflected mock-ruefully that if he had stayed a teacher he would have retired by now) he takes it as an opportunity to weigh up the significance of the choices he has made in his life. It seems appropriate then to give him the last word.

'On reflection I would say after all that I have not wasted my life. The teaching and the writing, they were both good, both necessary and brought some benefit to others. I think if you can say you brought not too much misery, yet a fair amount of benefit, to others, then you can deem your life a relative success '

5

Paul

'I think probably I still have the same ambitions I had when I was six years old, which is to be, to continue to be, a proper writer.'

At the time of the interview, Paul was the English subject leader of a large primary school serving a relatively disadvantaged catchment area in a medium-sized, light industrial town on the edge of London. He has had a varied career, including work as a journalist, on-line and on local newspapers, a number of arts charity posts, including some with high profile arts and literacy organisations, and, of course, teaching. His teaching career began in further education colleges, but his subsequent formal training was in teaching in the primary phase. After a year in the classroom he worked for some years on arts education projects, returning to the classroom in the year of the interview. He has a BA in English Literature, a post-graduate NCTJ journalism certificate, a PGCE and a post-graduate diploma in improving primary literacy. At the time of the interview he was following an MA course in Creative Writing. He sums up his career as 'mostly communications and mostly involving writing of some sort or another'.

Despite his wide-ranging experience, Paul is still young -in his early thirties at the time of the interview- and presented as a lively and committed interviewee, genuinely interested in

the questions asked and concerned to give a true account. He expressed the feeling that he had learnt about himself through the interview process.

The interview took place in an office in Paul's school at the end of a Friday afternoon and lasted about two hours.

Paul responded to the first draft with a number of constructive notes, mostly filling in missing details or correcting errors of fact, but said that he found the first draft to be on the whole fair and accurate, if somewhat 'sobering'.

Paul's writer identity

Early literacy experiences

Paul can trace his perception of himself as a writer back as far as an experience he had at the age of six or seven. He tells of jumping out his bath and without even drying himself, hurriedly writing down an idea that had just occurred to him. This episode may not be his earliest memory of writing, or of behaving as a writer but it is his first memory of seeing himself as a writer. In his words, 'I remember thinking, "Oh that makes me a writer, doesn't it?"' He says that his earliest ambition was to be a writer, and this remained the case throughout most of his childhood.

It is clear from Paul's account of his early life that he sees his writing identity as growing out of his life experiences. Home is recalled as a supportive rather than stimulating or instructive environment, where he was given the (physical and metaphorical) space to exercise his own interest in writing poetry and stories. His parents read him a bedtime story every night and made sure that he had lots of books to read, which exposed him to 'a lot of good writing'. His parents also represented an appreciative audience for his finished writing, with his mother often putting work he had done at school on display at home.

Paul identifies their encouragement to him to maintain this identity, alongside their willingness to leave him to his own devices as his parents' main contributions to his development as a writer. Even though both his parents were teachers and his father an English teacher, he does not recall any direct or active support for his writing from them.

Outside of school, Paul developed early an identity as a bookish child, spending a great deal of his time in the local library. The exact time he reports both as 'twice a week for a few hours' and 'every day'. In any event the library staff were moved to issue him with extra tickets so that he could take out more books. Interestingly, he reports that his visits were not just for the purpose of reading, but that also he 'used to sit there in the corner and write'. In addition he would spend much of his weekend time in second hand bookshops. His obsession for reading at times seems to have bordered on eccentricity. At one point he resolved to work through all the books in the library in alphabetical order, which entailed taking out 'a yard of books each time'. Despite these eccentricities, it is clear that his early enthusiasm for reading confirmed his self image as a literary person and that his reading directly shaped his writing efforts from a very early age, as he graduated from adventure stories inspired by Enid Blyton to stories involving orcs and hobbits when he was going through a 'Tolkien phase'.

Paul was encouraged and consistently supported to maintain his writer identity by his primary teachers, who, he believes, saw him as 'a talented writer'. According to Paul, his school reports corroborate this view. He felt he was being treated and respected as a writer when, as regularly happened, he was called upon to contribute a poem or some other writing to school productions: 'they would kind of write me into it'. He describes himself at this time as an eager, confident and prolific writer. He recalls little by way of direct

instruction or intervention from his primary teachers, but does portray them as active in supporting his writing development in an individual way: "I was told [...] to develop my own style."

The encouragement of his primary teachers extended to providing him with audiences in various forms. When he wrote long stories they would bind them into books and read them to the class. One long story was read out in daily instalments, something Paul remembers as highly motivating: 'it was almost writing to demand. I knew that I had to finish this story.' He was encouraged regularly to contribute material (e.g. poems) to be used in school productions. Paul's teachers clearly treated his written work with respect and respected him personally as a writer, even allowing him to give his writing priority over other curriculum activities.

Paul's primary school experience often seems to mirror the freedom and encouragement of his home life:

'Lots of my very early memories were very different from the way we teach children now, so I remember having whole afternoons where I would just be allowed to do my own thing and to write. I was quite happy to go away and sit under a tree somewhere and write and they were very, very flexible. And it really encouraged me to write.'

He talks of a relaxed, permissive and positive atmosphere and of children often being given the freedom to make their own choices. This was helped by the arrangement of the physical environment, which included a woodland area which children, out of sight of teachers, would, in the role of wardens, regularly 'go and look after'.

Paul makes little reference to other children at his primary school, but gives the impression of a relaxed environment, where a lack of direct supervision had only positive social consequences. His secondary school environment was quite different, with an experience on his first day underlining the social imperative not to stand out as different, in the case in point by using 'literary' vocabulary:

'We were told to come up with a speech about ourselves and I remember saying to this boy 'I'm going to start with talking about one of my idols' and he said 'no you're not' why? he said you never ever use a word like idol. People are gonna hit you if you use words like idol. You know, use a word like heroes, use a word more suitable for the people who are here, don't make yourself stand out.'

Paul found this incident particularly alienating. He resented what he saw as censorship of his language and the boy's, albeit well-intentioned complicity in the institutional 'lock[ing] down' of creativity.

In a later incident Paul endured public ridicule when, outside the dining hall one lunchtime, he dropped the notebook in which he wrote his poetry. Having a fellow student read his work aloud in a silly voice left him feeling 'belittled because I wrote poetry'. The episode reinforced his perceived outsider status as 'it just made me think yet again I'd done something that's not socially acceptable'.

Although insistent that he has no memory of being taught to write by his primary teachers, Paul does recognise their role in 'guiding' his writing. This process seems to have been characterised by a focus on style and a sense of dialogue which left the young writer at least some control of his text:

'I remember the teacher questioning my use of language cause she said I got it technically right ... it just didn't flow very well and I remember her sort of tweaking words and saying, "well is that the

right word, it might technically be the right word but do you need to think about the flow of the writing”, things like that.’

Editing seems to have been encouraged by drawing his attention to the sense of a text through his reading it aloud, something which brought frequent omitted words to his attention. He also recalls being advised to replace certain words with others more suitable to his primary age readers, a strategy he admits was probably his teacher tactfully suggesting he should change a complicated word used in the wrong context. He saw all these interventions as benign and constructive, with no ‘negative connotations’ and describes them as ‘steer[ing] me back’.

He describes his experience of secondary school teaching as ‘a big shift’. He does, however, single out one exceptional teacher, Robert Cliff, who ‘probably stands out as my best teacher ever’. Within a school which Paul portrays as hostile to writing and writers, Mr Cliff created a safe environment for writing:

‘His classroom was like this little haven in what was like this really, really rough school, where you could experiment with writing you could experiment doing different things ...’

Paul was motivated both by this teacher’s personal enthusiasm for writing and also his commitment to his students as creative and agentive individuals. Overwhelmingly, however, he appears to have found his treatment by his secondary teachers to be an alienating experience, though exactly how alienating is not quite clear: at one point he says that Mr Cliff was the only teacher to give him an appropriate degree of respect, while elsewhere he says that he felt ‘valued’ by all his English teachers (as opposed to teachers of all other subjects), who, he felt, respected and acknowledged his status as a writer. Evidence for the

latter can be found in his annual achievement of the school English prize, chosen by a succession of English teachers.

Paul's writing at primary school can be seen as authentic, in that it seems largely to have been either on subjects he had chosen to develop for himself or for real-world purposes such as school performances. At secondary school he encountered a curriculum geared to the production of a particular kind of writing, geared to examination success. With the exception Mr Cliff, Paul's view of his English teachers is that their concern was not to develop their students' writing talents but to meet the demands of the examination syllabus:

'They didn't seem to value writers, it was just "get them through, get them a few GCSEs"'

This does contradict his statement that he felt that all his English teachers respected him as a writer. In any event, secondary school seems to be the place where Paul first identified the concept of 'school writing' – something done in order to meet a set of exam-related criteria – as opposed to his own authentic writing.

Given his antipathy towards the school as an institution, its staff and its students, it is hardly surprising that he thought at the time, 'maybe I'm in the wrong place here'.

It is hard to discern any important personal influence or role model during Paul's formative years. He does not, for example, acknowledge any role for his parents, either as models or as providers of direct or active support, though he does recognise the positive effect of their giving him freedom and space to write. Similarly, the one exceptional teacher he singles out from his secondary school days, Mr Cliff, a man who 'probably stands out as my best teacher

ever' is credited mainly with creating a safe environment for writing within a school hostile to writing and writers. How far this reflects the reality of the situation and how far it is a matter of Paul positioning himself as a 'self-made' writer is a matter for speculation. His account of literacy at home focuses on his own actions, with little reference to what his parents did beyond 'they left me to my own devices'. It may be that his (teacher) parents' own literacy practices were more of an influence on him than he chooses to reveal.

Being a writer

In apparent contrast to his strong identification of author and text, Paul's definition of a writer is not an essentialist one, but rests fundamentally on actions and output. This means, *once a writer, not always a writer*, so if an individual fails to produce any writing for a period then they stop, for that period, being a writer. This may be Paul's reaction to people he perceives as dilettantes, 'so many people I've met talk about being a writer a lot more than they write', or to times when he personally has not felt worthy of the epithet: '...maybe a year will go by and I'll think, "I wasn't a writer in that year really"'.

Throughout his life, Paul seems to have seen the capacity to write as an integral part of himself, not something he has consciously learnt to do, nor, at least until recently, has had to work at. Like many people, he has no memory of taking the early steps of learning to read and write. When, as an adult, he asked his parents for information on his early history as a reader, they could only offer, 'you always just did'. Because he sees himself as having been self-motivated to write from an early age, he is glad that his parents 'left [him] to [his] own devices'.

Although he acknowledges that he must have engaged in learning activities as a young child, his lack of recall must contribute to a sense that his reading and writing identities are something central to his sense of self, not things he has needed to acquire through application.

He took easily to his first professional writing responsibilities, as a journalist on local newspapers.

'I was a really good local journalist.. it was (whispered) dead easy. Because you can churn out copy –I can churn out copy.. erm.. but it is very boring after a while. cause once you realize you can write on probably ten, fifteen topics, you can do it over and over again. One of the reasons I'm not a local journalist is because writing, you can write to formula, it's very very easy to write to formula.'

There can be no doubt that at this point in his life, Paul was a local journalist and fulfilled the role successfully. It is equally clear that he has little respect for a form of writing so far from the authentic craft to which he aspires. The important thing for his present identity is that he is not a journalist now, and that he does not wish to be associated with a form of writing which he sees as formulaic and lacking in personal expression. It may be that towards the end of his time in local journalism he was experiencing a conflict between a 'personal self' and the self he was required to enact in the workplace (Hochschild, 1979), so it is noteworthy that he referred to his induction into journalism as 'exciting writing things'. What began apparently as an experience of authentic writing (in comparison with his university experience) became something alienating. The experience does not in any way appear to have eroded his personal sense of self, rather it seems to have strengthened it (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000).

The perception that he sees writing as almost an instinctive skill is reinforced by the impression he gives that the act of composition owes much more to inspiration than perspiration.

'Sometimes I'll go [snaps fingers] there you go, that's a story, but it generally comes fully formed and I just write it down. So a couple of nights ago I sat down and thought I'll do some reading and then before I knew it I'd written a few pages of what could be the start of a story, I can wake up in the morning and I will have a piece ready to go. and it's an unconscious thing, it just sort of happens. Coleridge talked about 'I dreamt a poem' I may have dreamt a poem, it wasn't a very good poem but I dreamt one anyway. And all I've got to do now is write it down before someone interrupts me.'

However, more recently he has recognised the need to make a serious personal effort if he is to develop his writing further, and as well as following an MA course is planning to take a summer creative writing course, both to reserve some time for writing, when he will be free from other demands and to give more time than is his wont to revising and crafting his work.

Paul's view that texts communicate not simply the information content of a text, but also something about the writer as a person, is expressed explicitly in his conception of good writing:

'That spark is, I think, the person behind the writing, what makes a good piece of writing is some sort of authenticity and I really want to see the person behind that piece of writing.'

Author and text are intimately linked, and high quality characterised not in formal terms, but rather in terms of authenticity, which he seems to be defining as truth to the writer's self- as well as the power to express ideas. Speaking of his own writing, he talks of always striving to make his work more personal, so that, 'you can see the person behind that document' and when reviewing his own work he experiences some discomfort if he feels unable to recognise himself in the text. Negative evidence of Paul's close identification with his own

work can be seen in his reluctance to be publicly identified with some of his more routine journalism, which he dismisses as 'purely formula writing' and would 'pray' that the sub-editors would not give him a by-line.

In his description of the lengths to which he will go to ensure that a publication for parents is completely free of errors, there is a tacit acknowledgement that the function of writing is not simply to communicate, but also to present an impression of the author; for this audience, Paul chooses to present himself as a writer completely in control of the technical features of writing.

Audience and agency

In his own primary school days, audience not only acted as a motivator for Paul, but also confirmed the value of his work and so helped build his personal identity as a writer. For him as an adult, it appears to be a concept which is at once beneficial and problematic. In particular he seems to perceive a conflict between the demands of a readership and his personal agency to write as he pleases.

He makes frequent reference to audience as an important factor in determining the authenticity of writing in general. The purpose of (inauthentic) 'school writing' is, he implies, to be assessed for its content of prescribed formal features. It could be argued that in this extreme form it has no audience at all; nobody reads it for the purpose of finding its overall meaning, to derive pleasure from it or in any way to relate to the author.

However, in respect of his own writing, Paul appears to be somewhat challenged by the concept of audience, even, at one point, claiming that his creative writing has no audience at all, not even himself, in part because his drafts are not completed to a standard he finds acceptable.

'It's more to get thoughts out of your head really. I wouldn't read and reread my um work; whole reams worth of uneditable, unusable rubbish.'

He appears to underplay the importance of writing a blog, publishing on other people's blogs and writing songs for performance. He even forgets to mention his output during five years as a journalist on a local newspaper, until the end of the interview, when he suddenly remembers it. He gives the impression of a kind of self-containment which sits well with his description of writing as 'essentially a most solipsistic pleasure'.

At other times, however, a defining feature of good writing, or at least writing which can be defined as 'creative' seems to be its ability to engage an audience by telling a story, and this is an area he sees as a personal weakness: "I'm, not a natural storyteller ... and I would love to be that person who can really sort of hold an audience spellbound."

Paul's conception of himself as a writer is often expressed in terms of freedom and agency and while acknowledging a responsibility to retain his reader's interest, he asserts his right to 'do what I want to do', whatever the reader thinks. This he sees as resulting in a style unrestricted by convention, and therefore, he asserts, often innovative. At one point in the interview the expression of an independent stance extends to an assertion of independence of any readership. He describes his blog as a tool of personal reflection which he does not expect many people to read. In particular he tends not to share what he calls 'my creative

stuff'. In fact, he rarely returns to read drafts himself and has a haphazard recall of work published.

This declared insouciance towards his audience is matched by a belief that a writer must maintain a degree of separation from family and friends. Several times in the interview he refers to a view attributed to Graham Greene that 'you've got to have that shard of ice in your heart if you're going to be a writer' as support for his desire to absent himself in order to write.

Many of the positive references Paul makes to his early writing experiences relate to the concept of agency. He was glad to be free to develop his own way of writing, on themes and at times and in places of his own choosing. When talking about both his own writing and writing undertaken by school students, Paul frequently expresses the view that the only 'real' writing is writing which is freely undertaken.

Academic and literary identity

Paul studied English literature at university and during the interview he gave me the impression that he had been unhappy with the teaching and assessment he had experienced there. The only specific episode he related from this period of his life was the time he tried an 'experimental' approach to essay writing, which was marked harshly. In more general terms general terms, he says, for example, 'They'd look at my work and go, "that doesn't fit [...] what I think an essay is usually"' and 'some of the tutors disliked my style immensely'. However, in his response to the first draft of this chapter, Paul reveals that he remembers receiving only one low mark, 'the rest were high 2:1s or low firsts'. It seems that in his desire

to present himself as something of a subversive, unwilling to submit to academic conventions, he temporarily overlooked his more frequent successes.

In keeping with his apparent alienation he opted for an unconventional conclusion to his studies, avoiding formal exams and instead gaining work experience as a journalist, something he describes as doing 'exciting writing things'. And, as already noted, it seems likely that these 'exciting' activities included the hack journalism of which he is dismissive elsewhere.

Although Paul does not express great enthusiasm for his university education, much of what he says identifies him as an English literature graduate. He is confident in his own capabilities as a writer (if not always when compared with publishing authors, then certainly when compared with those who do not specialise in the field) and of his entitlement to pass judgment on the literacy skills of others (e.g. in his capacity as 'apostrophe Nazi'). He frequently cites great authors to support his arguments.

The only time Paul speaks positively about the potential value of what can be called skills instruction is with regard to his university education. He expresses regret that as an undergraduate he had never been taught how to write a formal essay, reflecting,

'Oh God, you know, if I'd have learnt the formula, the way of writing that essay, I probably could have aced everything.'

It is not at all clear whether this a genuine expression of regret at a lost opportunity to fully belong in the academic world, or a wry dismissal of academic writing as simply a game undergraduates are arbitrarily required to learn.

Paul's greatest influence seem to be not anybody known to him personally, but a group of literary authors whom he greatly admires and respects, and he is keen to acknowledge that his views on writing have been shaped by them. The interview includes frequent references to the likes of Hemingway, Greene and Marquez. These authorities' perspectives on writing not only affect the way Paul himself writes, but also influence his approach to teaching writing.

It is clear from much of what he says, and the way in which he expresses himself, that Paul has a robust identity as an *homme de lettres* and it seems reasonable to assume that a proportion of the knowledge that underpins this identity was acquired at university. However, it is equally clear that Paul has no strong affinity with the academic world and no desire to present himself as an academic.

Challenges to Paul's writer identity

Paul's writing identity appears somewhat vulnerable to the comparisons he makes with the achievements of peers. A sense of threat can be inferred in comments about friends who have published. His defence, that they are "very driven people and they are people who have chosen their writing over other thing" leaves Paul open to the charge of being less of a writer than they are, especially given his definition of writers as 'people who write'.

Given that belief, the demands on his time from a young family and a new and demanding teaching job logically should seriously reduce the opportunities he has for writing and therefore erode his self-perception as a creative writer. The desire on the one hand to write and on the other to lead a fulfilling life is clearly a source of tension for Paul. He greatly

values his family life and, in particular, time spent with his young daughter, but believes that 'the ones who are successful are the ones who do not have families'. He also sees time given to his hobby of sailing as a sacrifice of possible writing time: 'I know I *could* sit down and write for the day, there are many, many Sundays where I just want to get out onto the water...' It is the successful writers who have Greene's 'shard of ice' in their heart, and are therefore able to turn their backs on emotional commitment and relaxation.

The most striking examples of this come when he differentiates himself from published writers, portraying them as people who have been prepared ruthlessly to sacrifice personal relationships and all other pursuits in order to dedicate themselves to their art. These are people who do possess Greene's 'shard of ice'. The fact that Paul chooses to interpret Greene in this way (when, in fact he was referring to the writer's need to be emotionally detached from their *subject*) is perhaps an indicator of how strongly he feels about this aspect of a writer's life. He presents himself, by contrast as a loving family man with various leisure interests.

Distancing himself from writers in a different way, he implies he is not prepared to compromise his standards, even though there are other writers who are prepared to publish mediocre material.

'I want to go in [to the published world] as someone who's really good, not one of the people who they say oh... that's interesting, that's OK.'

Given his many references to himself as a writer this suggests a somewhat inconsistent stance, which can possibly be explained in terms of a certain lack of confidence in himself as

a literary writer of the highest order, or at least as a story teller. “I’m, not a natural storyteller ... and that’s maybe what.. some of my friends have got.”

Paul’s specific response to the success of others in finding an audience is to put more time and effort into his writing, specifically by returning to his many notebooks and reworking the early drafts they contain. His resolution to improve as a storyteller by leaving his family to attend a creative writing course involves, perhaps, a small splinter of ice.

Paul’s teacher identity

Being a teacher

Despite Paul’s reservations about his possession of certain writerly attributes, it is clear from the frequent considerations of his own position as a writer throughout the interview, that he feels his writer identity to be very strong. With his teacher identity the position is not so clear-cut, and some conflicts, which will be explored later in this chapter, are revealed, both between that identity and his writer identity, and between certain aspects of his teacher identity. It would, however, be surprising if he were completely resistant to a teacher identity since, apart from the fact that he is a trained and experienced teacher and has recently chosen to return to teaching, both his parents were teachers during his childhood years and, as his blog reveals, his mother is now a teacher educator.

Paul’s view of the kind of person a teacher should be appears to derive from his childhood experiences; he speaks approvingly of primary teachers who encouraged him, supported his idiosyncrasies and gave him time and space to write. He gives the example of one of his teachers, whose encouraging response to his ‘appalling’ handwriting was to allow him to ‘develop his writing in his own way’. He describes the school’s regime, with apparent

approval, as 'relaxed' and 'permissive' recalling that students 'were given quite a lot of freedom to make our own choices'. At secondary school he identifies two very positive elements in Mr Cliff's approach: first he demonstrated a great personal enthusiasm for writing, and secondly he valued and encouraged Paul's personal creativity.

Paul seems to see himself as the kind of enabling teacher he encountered mostly at primary school, encouraging children to appreciate and use their own experiences as topics for writing –'getting them to see that their experiences are interesting', motivating them through engaging tasks and showing a keen interest in what they write.

Whilst his primary teachers appear to have taken a great deal of interest in Paul as an individual, with one exception he found his secondary teachers lacking in this respect. He was particularly appalled by the headteacher's attitude:

'Every year, while I was at that school, I won the English prize, and the headteacher never learnt my name. [...] I remember I was always shocked that she couldn't remember someone's name after 6 years of introducing me to the school.'

As a teacher, Paul is keen that the children he teaches should have the opportunity to relate their own experiences through their writing, for example by setting them the task of writing autobiographies.

Thanks to his reading and study of the work of respected authors, Paul is happy to present himself as an authority on the English language, a position expressed most colourfully when he admits to being 'some sort of apostrophe Nazi', prepared to 'take teachers' work down and get them to redo it'. This attitude seems to be opposed to his expressed view on the

relative unimportance of correct spelling: 'I don't think spelling 'February' with or without the first 'r' is ... it's totally immaterial really'. Both positions, however, appear to arise from a belief in the prime importance of clarity of meaning - no reasonable person would interpret 'Febuary' as anything but the second month of the year, whereas a misplaced apostrophe can significantly change meaning. However, he takes care to ensure that in any of his writing which is seen by others is flawless in terms of spelling, punctuation and other typos.

He seems equally comfortable to see himself as the possessor of a body of professional expertise and knowledge which enables him to make judgments in respect of his teaching and of the learning and well-being of pupils.

Some of Paul's school experiences gave him firm ideas about what teachers and teaching should not be. At secondary school he developed a negative conception of an exam-driven English curriculum, following principles which he saw as a distraction from his development as a writer.

Ironically, then, the aspect of his current teaching position which he refers to most often is his role as agent in the implementation of a government-prescribed curriculum. He sometimes expresses a certain degree of commitment to this, but at other times distances himself from it, for example describing what is required of teachers and pupils as 'a game' and his own participation in that game as 'cynical'. Interestingly he describes the strategies he and his colleagues use in order to achieve prescribed targets such as 'We've got to get a certain number of children to level 5' as 'teaching as a teacher'. Time and again in the interview he contrasts what he sees as writing to a formula with children's own writing, and

the regime he is entrusted to enforce is in his mind very different from the personal experience of primary schooling to which he refers so positively.

Practice

Paul takes two distinct approaches to the teaching of writing, one, based on the skills and knowledge he is bound to teach, which guides the majority of his classroom teaching time, and the other, outside of formal lessons, where children write freely.

Because of the constraints of the curriculum a good proportion of Paul's class teaching time is spent on tasks which are closely directed and designed to elicit certain prescribed elements in children's writing. This kind of lesson generally starts with the children looking at the features of carefully chosen texts and then at particular sections, for example, in the case of a narrative, 'we'll look at introductions we'll look at build ups we'll look at things like that'.

He bristles at what he sees as the falseness of this kind of activity, saying, 'it's not real writing, it's not.. It's not what you would do in real.. in a real situation' as a 'real' text is likely to contain characteristics of a number of the prescribed genres. He concedes that the approach may be of value to some children, those lacking 'flair' or 'motivation' as a form of scaffolding. He attempts to make such tasks more engaging by using subject matter which children will find interesting:

'what drives the children is a really interesting task so there's no need to do a boring argument text if you can think of something really interesting to argue about.'

Alternatively he will try to find a real audience for their writing, giving the example of submitting pieces for publication on the TES website.

'they need real audiences they need to know it's not just me who's looking at their work and they need to preferably feel really passionate about what it is they're writing about. '

He argues that this kind of exposure not only sweetens the task, it improves the quality of the writing because 'you get better results if they care about the writing.'

In the interview, Paul makes clear his belief that the purpose of spelling is to make oneself understood. As the English leader, he has introduced a spelling scheme of work to the school and though he does not go into details it seems likely that this involves learning spellings outside of the context of composition. His enthusiasm for this kind of approach is not great; at one point he says, 'I do give them spellings now I've been told to' and at another 'I'm the English leader, I *should be* setting the policy on these things' (my emphasis).

All this compliance with the prescribed curriculum he says as 'knowing how the game is played' and the purpose of the game is:

'to show a certain sort of progression and we have our baseline targets and there are all sorts of things that we've got to meet and we've got to get a certain number of children to level 5.'

As with the examples of writing for a real audience, or arguing for a personally held belief, Paul sees some directed writing activities as more authentic than others. He speaks positively about a Year 4 poetry lesson in which he began by asking the class how they wanted to go about writing on the subject of 'wind and weather'. As practiced players of the

game, children suggested thinking of words, listing them on the board and constructing mind maps. Whilst accepting these ideas, Paul then suggested:

'why don't we go outside, why don't we go and sit outside and close our eyes and think what can I feel, what can I see, what can I sense, what can I smell ...?'

As Paul gave no hint that he uses such techniques in connection with his own writing-in fact such activities are probably more distant from the everyday practices of writers than the text analysis he dismisses as not part of 'real writing'. Given the relatively recent date of his own initial teacher education I can only speculate that the provenance of such a Creative Writing style of approach lies in his own school experience.

In another attempt to bring children's personal experiences into school writing, he began the school year by asking his classes to write autobiographies. Despite tasks such as these being designed to be as personal and meaningful as possible to the young writers, to Paul they still do not qualify as 'real' writing, because

'I think that when children can see that writing is part of this grand scheme of education then it isn't real writing; when they choose to write for themselves it's real writing.'

Paul believes that some of his class lessons meet the test of authenticity. Letters thanking an author for his visit, for example are really sent and are 'authentic' both because the visitor will read them (and perhaps reply) and because Paul will not mark them -so they cannot be part of the game of school writing. They remain, however, a teacher directed activity rather than a matter of individual choice.

On top of meeting his obligations to the curriculum, Paul takes responsibility for creating an environment in which children are free to write on any subject and have the opportunity to be published. He encourages them to enter writing competitions and submit their writing to web sites (such as the TES site mentioned above), helps them turn their completed work into bound books which can then be borrowed alongside more conventional books, and manages a blog on which any work can be published. Although he has oversight of what is published, Paul says he resists the temptation to edit work, preferring to discuss such matters as the role of Standard English and strategies for ensuring conventional spelling at a later date. It may be that this is a principle rather than invariant practice, as he also talks about doing 'a couple of minor edits, where I think it really, really needs it'. Although Paul is able to make some time within the school day for this kind of writing, most of it is done in children's own time, usually at home.

Although children are free to contribute to the blog or not, and to write on any subject they choose, Paul does see it as part of his role to suggest topics and approaches. For the weekend after the interview took place, children were asked to write about a setting close to home, looking at it 'in a different light', closely documenting 'the sights and sounds and smells'. He is keen to add that he has given no directions as to the form of the piece, so that the writing, for each child, is 'an experiment' which, in Paul's estimation, will 'get them thinking like writers'.

A key difference between the two teaching approaches can be seen in the way errors are treated in each. In children's free writing, Paul says they are free to make mistakes but encouraged to learn from them. Publication means they are motivated to 'do[..] justice to

[their] work'. To meet the demands of curriculum assessment, however, Paul must require children to regularise any errors quickly, before specifying changes to bring the work to a higher assessment level.

Challenges to Paul's teacher identity

Much of the evidence Paul offers about his teaching identity reveals doubts and uncertainties about his role and his outright opposition to certain requirements. In this way his teaching identity is challenged from within. In a similar way he feels vulnerable to the charge of not being a 'real' or 'proper' teacher when he reveals aspects of his writing self. His practice of modelling his own methods as a writer, with all the hesitations, uncertainties, false starts and revisions that involves, generates an anxiety that 'some of the kids are going, "He should know; he's the teacher."' He feels vulnerable to the charge that he is not the authority that his students may think he should be.

His own sense of never having learnt the skills of writing through being explicitly taught –'I just did [learn to write]'- leaves him with a degree of doubt about his capacities as a teacher. He explicitly notes that his 'just learning' 'makes teaching writing quite difficult'.

Paul's writer-teacher identity

Bringing a writer identity into the classroom

In Paul's view, there are ways in which his writing identity is supportive of his teaching identity; by showing his pupils that he is a writer, he believes he can be more effective as a writing teacher. He refers a number of times to 'modelling'. Sometimes this means

demonstrating the behaviour of a writer as s/he composes a text, something Paul calls 'externalis[ing] that process', and in his words, an example of 'teaching as a writer'. But by modelling he also means writing alongside his pupils, undertaking the same task, as is his frequent practice. Paul explains that he does this because he wants the children to see him as a writer. This reveals a view of teaching as more than simply instruction but also a matter of children learning through getting to know him and through identification with him, as a writer.

From the perspective of a writer, Paul frequently expresses alienation from the writing curriculum he is expected not only to teach, but to lead all the teachers in the school in teaching. His conviction that the strictures of the National Curriculum assessment cannot, in themselves, foster authentic writing, brings a degree of conflict between his teaching and writing identities. As a result he distinguishes between 'teaching as a teacher' and teaching as a writer'. When talking about 'teaching as a teacher' his focus tends to be on transcriptional skills such as spelling, and in following formal guidance such as his school's marking policy. A recent decision to be 'strict with spelling' he attributes to 'seeing myself more as a teacher than as a writer in terms of marking their work, so I follow the marking policy', though it is apparent from other things he says that he feels a degree of pressure to take such a path. Although the English leader, he positions himself as a follower in this matter.

In contrast, he portrays 'teaching as a writer' as going beyond the details of the required curriculum to encourage writing which is 'authentic'. This represents a degree of resistance to a certain kind of teacher identity, the kind which he sees as officially sanctioned. Paul

speaks explicitly of two teacher identities, 'teacher as writer' and 'teacher as teacher'. The latter is an identity he adopts consciously and under some duress –it might be better termed a 'guise' (or even a 'disguise'), but one he must enact in the way he presents himself to his colleagues and to some extent to his pupils. He describes how he presents a dual identity to children, by both giving them details of criteria they must fulfil in order to attain a given level whilst admitting that 'that's not going to make a brilliant piece of writing' and giving additional advice from a writer's perspective. The logical conclusion of this is the dual curriculum described earlier in this chapter, with assessment-driven class lessons on the one hand and free writing supported by publication opportunities on the other.

It is clear that in any contest between writing and teaching, for Paul the former will always be the winner. He talks of times when children have found his writerly lessons too challenging and although he has clearly learnt from the experience to be more learner-friendly, he still maintains 'I approach the teaching of writing more as a writer than a teacher.' This cannot be literally true, since (as Andy observed) in the act of teaching he will certainly be viewed by his pupils as a teacher, and in the moment his actions and a good part of his understanding will be a teacher's. It seems likely that he either means that in his teaching he is drawing substantially on his writing self, or that he is using a very specialised definition of 'teacher'.

In fact, much of what Paul refers to as 'teaching as a teacher' refers to teaching in order to meet the demands of prescribed assessment criteria. He says that he does not believe that the system, based as it is on levels and targets relating mostly to formal features of language and text is 'what makes good writers'. He doubts the validity of the assessment criteria he is

charged with teaching and enforcing, distinguishing 'box ticking' from worthwhile learning. He is also concerned at the importance accorded to the results of national testing, by parents as well as the educational establishment. This is not only because of the stress experienced by children, but also because he rejects the whole idea that progress and quality in writing can be easily quantified:

'trying to get children to be authentic in their writing. which, is quite difficult to quantify, you can't put a level on it.'

The pressure to get results represents a challenge to Paul's teacher identity, and he makes several references to being under 'a lot of pressure' to bring substantial numbers of his pupils up to certain prescribed curriculum levels. This is pressure to become the approved kind of box-ticking, target-chasing teacher and therefore a direct challenge to the identity of 'writer- teacher' that he would prefer to have. As already noted, he is even prepared to express his alienation to his pupils, by expressing reservations about guidance relating to level criteria and giving them additional advice.

Paul makes (and frequently refers to) a distinction between the kind of writing prescribed by the National Curriculum and 'real writing' and believes that such a distinction is of importance to children and something they are aware of. This is not to say that Paul rejects all attempts to teach certain aspects of writing. As already noted, he regrets not having been taught essay structure at school or university. However, it further points to Paul's *teacher as writer/teacher as teacher* dichotomy, with the writer identity tending to support the development of 'real' writing, while the teacher identity supports the needs of national assessments.

While he believes that the route to development as a writer is writing freely undertaken, he is conscious that his post of responsibility obliges him to conform in his day to day practice and in leading the development and implementation of the school's approach to the curriculum.

One of the reasons that Paul objects to the strictures of the school curriculum is that they do not correspond to his own judgment as to what constitutes 'good' writing, and he calls on writers he considers to be literary authorities to support him.

For example the requirement that children should use a variety of words in place of 'said' in order to achieve a higher level contradicts the advice of Elmore Leonard:

'on his sheet of Ten mistakes never to make, one of them is, "Never use a word other than said to mark speech."' ¹

He dismisses the injunction that children should be encouraged to use copious adverbs with an expression of disbelief and an appeal to Hemingway's economy with them.

On several occasions, Paul makes clear his belief that writers (or, probably, highly respected literary writers) have greater authority in these matters than those whose writing is confined to such texts as education policies. Not only does Paul see authors as the best arbiters of the form writing should take, he also says that literary authors, rather than teachers or educationalists, are the major influence on his beliefs as to how to teach writing. In his words,

'Most of the things that inspire me to teach are other writers rather than people in education'.

¹ Leonard's actual rule is 'Never use a verb other than "said" to carry dialogue'. All ten rules can be found at <http://www.fastcompany.com/3016163/elmore-leonards-10-simple-rules-for-writing>

It is perhaps worth noting that the writers he cites have little if anything to say about the way writing is taught.

Distancing from other teachers

The construction of a personal identity is often as much about excluding oneself from particular identity groups as it is about claiming membership. Paul explicitly distances himself from certain identity groups on a number of occasions during the interview, often groups of which he is apparently a member.

As already noted, there is some evidence that Paul does not identify closely with his teacher colleagues. At one point in the interview, for example, he refers to the possibility of his actions upsetting 'all the teachers', implying that he doesn't quite see himself as one of them. His assertion at different points that his spelling and handwriting are not good could also be interpreted as a distancing of himself from conventional standards which are generally perceived to be highly valued by conventional teachers. It does appear that certain aspects of his teaching persona are areas of tension. At times it almost feels as though he has constructed a stereotypical teaching identity for other (rule-abiding, non-writing) teachers which he refuses to accept for himself, even though he must visibly adopt it with colleagues for the sake of his 'subject leader' identity.

Paul consciously or unconsciously distances himself from various aspects of the role of teacher and from his teacher colleagues in other ways. He portrays some of his own newly-introduced curriculum policies as impositions on 'the teachers', who, he implies, will often be out of step with his thinking. He casts himself in the role of a superior when he 'take[s]

teachers' work down and get[s] them to redo it because it's got apostrophes in the wrong place.'

As already noted one aspect of teaching identity from which he very firmly distances himself is that of teacher as implementer of government curriculum policy. At times he seems to be saying that this is now expected to be a teacher's primary role; indeed it seems to be what he means by 'teaching as a teacher'. To the extent that it is a necessary part of his job (and that is a great extent) Paul does in fact take on this identity, for example through actively teaching spelling, and developing a spelling policy used across the school. However, his account of explicitly differentiating for children between 'what you need to get level 5' from 'what you need to make this writing better' suggests not only that he adopts the role with a certain sense of irony, but also that he wants the children he teaches to appreciate his doubts, and know that he is asking them to play the National Curriculum game.

This (pro-writer) bias is reflected in his career, during which, whatever his day job, he has always in some way been a writer. At the time of the interview, even though he had a demanding teaching and management post in school, he kept up his own fiction writing and maintained a professionally-focused blog. He is happy to state that the reason why, in his early days as a teacher, he retained the deputy editorship of an on-line music magazine was to 'keep [his] [...] journalistic writing going'. It is worth noting, however, that Paul has not undertaken any sort of teaching responsibilities during the periods when writing has been his principal occupation. It is to be a writer (and not a teacher) which he identifies as his lifelong ambition:

'I think probably I still have the same ambitions I had when I was six years old, which is to be, to continue to be, a proper writer.'

Reflection

Paul talks of an almost lifelong self-awareness as a writer. The first writing memory he offers is not of the act of writing, but his recollection of thinking he was a writer. Whereas Andy's first interest is in the perfection of texts, for Paul, identity appears paramount. It is as if 'being a writer' is more important for him than the act of writing itself, or its products, even though these are of course necessary for the construction of a writer identity. Probably the period of greatest challenge to his writer identity was his secondary school days, when, by his account, he risked the ridicule of his peers and the disdain of many of his teachers. Even at this time he shows no sign that he ceased to see himself as a writer, or ever ceased writing for his own purposes. His identity as a writer is clearly visible throughout the interview and rarely appears to be challenged by other identities he may hold.

On the face of it, there are two identities which appear to compete with some success with his writing. The first is as a loving husband and father and he does indicate that there have been times in his life when the calls of family life have temporarily prevailed over his desire to write. The second is his love of sailing, which sometimes displaces his writing. This victory is clearly transient: if Paul goes sailing today he can write tomorrow. But then, on a longer timescale, so is his commitment to family life. This is not to say that he is on the point of abandoning his family in order to return to his writing -few writers are total monomaniacs- but that he now feels that he has reached a point in his life where he can reclaim some more time for writing, as evidenced by his enrolment on a creative writing courses.

Paul is a spontaneous writer who says he writes quickly and fluently. He makes no reference to planning and little to revision, seeming to spend much more time on the production of early drafts, much of which he dismisses as 'uneditable, unusable rubbish' than on bringing

his work to a state where it can be shared with others. In this he seems very different from Andy, who not only prides himself on the well-finished nature of his work, but who disparages teaching strategies which encourage children to produce 'reams of gibberish'. The impression of Paul's preference for early drafting is bolstered by his apparent low output of published work, though it eventually emerged in the interview that over the years, largely through his journalism and blogging, he has in fact reached a wide audience.

He values skilful storytelling in the writing of others, but does not see himself as possessing these skills. He is less clear about what he sees as his strengths. He clearly writes quickly and without inhibition and is very confident of his mastery of the transcriptional skills of writing. He speaks at some length about his effectiveness when writing funding bids, an effectiveness due to his ability to conceptualise the needs and interests of the reader and tailor his text accordingly. These claims are in interesting counterpoint to his professed indifference to any audience for his more creative work.

How he views the role of audience is a question it would have been interesting to explore further. When teaching children he finds numerous ways of allowing them to publish in some way, and is disparaging about the value of writing which is done only for the eyes of the teacher. With the perspective given by looking at the work of others, Paul sees the value of audience in giving writing purpose. Perhaps it is modesty which leads him not to mention many of his own numerous publications, or perhaps for Paul the pleasure of writing come from the rapid and insouciant shaping of thoughts which is characteristic of early drafting; he certainly seems to have produced many more first drafts than final ones. But despite his protested lack of interest, he chooses freely to publish his work on-line.

Maybe his music journalism can be explained (as he does explain it) as a way of keeping his hand in while teaching, but can there be any reason for his teaching blog beyond the desire to share his thoughts with the wider educational community? (Otherwise, why not keep a journal?) Moreover, that sharing extends further to sharing himself. One point about the properties of good writing on which he is quite clear is that it should in some way reveal to the reader the individual who is the author. This is another point on which he differs from Andy's concentration on the perfect (implicitly impersonal) text.

An important factor in his self image as a writer, or at least as a literary person, is his respect for great writers. He accords to them a status of model and mentor which he allows none of the figures (*e.g.* teachers, parents) one might expect to take this role. Not only do they provide the template and rationale for the way he writes, Paul also considers them to be the principal authority over the way he teaches. However, despite a degree of tension, the views of writers do not quite govern how he lives his personal life. The detachment symbolised by Greene's splinter of ice is something he feels he should aspire to, but in the final analysis his family is too important to him.

Another reference point for Paul is the writers who are his peers. Those who achieve success, measured through publication, he sees as having followed his interpretation of Greene's entreaties, detaching themselves from others in a way he finds impossible. He is different from them, he is not sufficiently 'driven'. However, he does express his intention to become more focussed on his writing in future.

If he is not quite the writer he aspires to be, it is very evident that Paul does aspire to be that writer. His position in respect of his teaching identity is less easy to pin down. All teachers must function within a school system and within an individual school, and this he has not

always found easy. He was obviously happiest in his own primary school days, in an environment he remembers as *laissez faire* and encouraging, but especially one which respected and nurtured him as an individual. Now, as a teacher, he finds himself uncomfortable with a school curriculum he finds geared to assessment, and a form of assessment which, in his view, privileges a set of relatively arbitrary criteria above what he considers to be the qualities of good writing. However, in his post as English subject leader, just as, presumably, in his own secondary schooling, he seems to have found a compromise he can live with.

In his teaching practice he accommodates the demands of a centrally prescribed curriculum, while doing his best to recreate for children at least some of the context for writing he enjoyed himself at primary school. He respects and encourages children's ownership of their own writing and the place of their agency, which he fears may be suppressed in more conventional lessons. Only by maintaining an unorthodox element in his teaching is he able to enable children to write in a way he considers authentic, that is to say in a way which reflects the author's individuality.

He talks of school writing as a game which children must learn to play, and the way he talks about teaching school writing makes it feel like he considers this aspect of his teaching role to be a game too. This is not to say that he is not serious about teaching; he is clearly determined that the children he teaches should be successful in school and in their writing but also concerned that the current regime in schools makes that task more difficult to achieve in any meaningful and personally satisfying way.

However, he does not claim the identity of teacher with the same vigour as he claims the identity of writer. He describes his early teaching positions as 'bizarre' and gives the

impression that teaching is something he has stumbled into; very different from his lifelong commitment to being a writer. When he talks about the elements of his life which compete with writing for his time and energy, teaching, a famously time-consuming and exhausting profession is not mentioned. When outlining his career he says he has 'no idea' what his next step will be. While, like Andy, Paul appears to place his writing identity above his teaching identity, their sense of what it is to be a writer differs: for Andy, writing is about 'beauty and truth', with the implication that these are if not objective qualities they are at least separate from their author. For Paul, the creation of a text is an important way of enacting a personal identity.

The construction of a personal identity is often as much about excluding oneself from particular groups as it is about claiming membership. Paul explicitly distances himself from certain identity groups on a number of occasions during the interview, often from groups - journalists, academics, teachers- of which he is or has been, by all conventional criteria, a member. To a greater or lesser extent this may be due to an interviewee's resistance to being categorised by a researcher. The fact that Paul's response to the first draft of this chapter shows him to have been much more of an academic success than he was prepared to admit face-to-face supports such a conclusion. However, while the evidence of his teacher identity builds a complex picture, Paul's commitment to the identity of writer never falters.

6

Philippa

It's just if you love it and you want to write then you are a writer. So I always think of myself as a writer, yeah.'

'I always follow the Strategies, I've never kind of gone away from anything that I was supposed to be doing [...] teaching it well, hopefully.'

Philippa is an energetic and enthusiastic young teacher and writer who at the time of the interview was in the ninth year of her teaching career. By her own account she is a prolific writer of fiction, though little of her output has been published.

The interview took place in Philippa's classroom, in a school located in a residential area of a city in the East of England. It lasted just over seventy minutes. Philippa answered all questions readily and fluently, speaking rapidly in what (to me at least) felt like a youthful style –she used the word 'like' very frequently.

Following her reading of the first draft of this chapter, Philippa sent copious and detailed comments. Some of these gave additional information and clarification, but a significant proportion sought to correct inferences I had made from what she had said. These comments have been fully taken into account in finalising the text.

Philippa's writer identity

Early experiences

Philippa seems to have seen herself as a writer from the earliest age. Her earliest memories of graphic creativity begin with 'pictures and words and sentences and stuff' at the age of around 4, and story writing from the age of about 7. Her family background was, by her account, very conducive to writing. Before Philippa was born, her mother had been a nursery teacher, and Philippa credits her for the fact that she was able to read and write by the time she started school, calling her 'the person who most taught and inspired me from a young age'.

Her parents also provided material support in the form of plentiful notebooks, pencils and pens and even a typewriter. The typewriter spurred her into greater productivity, and she recalls the Christmas when she received it as the point at which she 'started writing stories all the time'. Her oeuvre at this time included a long story, *The Isberg's Travels*, about a family who travelled the world on a boat, 'having adventures'. They also provided a writing environment through giving her a quiet room with a desk and access to a lot of books. Philippa particularly values reading because, in her opinion, 'the best writers read a lot, I think, don't they?'. Her parents also gave moral support in the form of encouragement and praise for the work she showed them.

Later in childhood, she describes herself as a voracious reader, frequently visiting the public library,

'getting out as many books as I could get on my ticket and walking back up the hill, like reading them as I went',

and generally reading everything she could find. She cites *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the*

Galaxy', the *Hardy Boys* mystery stories, the works of Roald Dahl and Elinor M. Brent-Dyer's Chalet School books as texts she particularly loved at this period, but singles out one particular writer, Enid Blyton, as providing a model for her own writing at the time. She describes a lot of her stories as

'rip offs of Enid Blyton books, sort of like loosely inspired but basically with the exact same plot'.

She recognises her particular interest in narrative as stemming from the very beginnings of her literacy experience and while, true to her spirit of 'just reading everything' she read other genres too, she would often use these non-fiction texts as an inspiration for the construction of her own narratives. So, for example, she recalls enjoying a book on how to build a doll's house, not because she actually did build a doll's house, but because she 'liked reading about it and imagining it'. She certainly responded to deliberate appeals to her imagination, enjoying a book which told her 'how to spot if your gran's a witch'. She dates her interest in character and plot back to this period, too.

At primary school she remembers herself as 'always, like, the natural writer' and she seems to have been treated as a child with a precocious aptitude for writing, leading one teacher to conclude that she was 'born in the wrong age'. Thanks to the fact that her abilities as a writer never seem to have been in doubt, she was given a good deal of freedom with her writing, which she sees now as being 'kinda left a lot of the time'. In the interview she expressed a lack of recollection of being explicitly taught specific writing skills, including handwriting, saying rather that she was given a topic to write on and then 'just had to get on with it'. However, in her later comments she talks about her mother giving her 'grammar and comprehension books', which she would work steadily through.

In general, her recall of the primary school curriculum is of one which alternated between *laisser-faire* activities ('they'd let you do projects and stuff'; 'they said do something you're interested in and just do work on it.') and rote learning ('I remember learning countries and capitals off by heart in Year 5'). In her comments on the first draft of this chapter she clarifies the nature of the writing tasks, saying that they were never totally free, but initiated through some kind of prompt 'of the kind that would be found in a SATs paper' or maybe through a cartoon strip.

Although, as will be noted later, this conflicts with her adult and professional view of how writing should be taught, she says she always enjoyed the challenge of a 'decent' creative writing task and was happy to be free to write as she wished. When pressed for a negative memory of school writing she can only offer that she was sometimes frustrated at not having the chance to finish a particular story. There was, 'never anything bad'

Despite Philippa's sense that her teachers were not particularly interested in actively supporting her development as a writer, she did sometimes enjoy the positive experience of acclaim for her finished work. One of her poems was originally thought to have been 'copied [...] from somewhere', but once it was recognised as authentic she was pleased to be allowed to make a neat copy for display. She was also encouraged to enter writing competitions and here the motivation lay in the prospect of her work being recognised and selected, rather than a desire for competitive success.

The (at least partial) exception to the *laisser-faire* regimes which constitute her predominant memory of primary schooling is her experience of the teaching of Mrs Dyson, who taught

her in both Year 3 and Year 6. Philippa remembers her as a writer ('She wrote stories herself.') but it would probably be more accurate to call her a storyteller.

'She would tell us these stories about Naughty Rabbit who lived in a green dustbin at the bottom of her garden. Whenever there was a spare moment she would kind of just make up a story on the spot.'

To Philippa's recollection the stories were not written down but told spontaneously, or 'from memory' as Mrs Dyson drew the dustbin in green chalk on the blackboard. She describes these events as among 'the best times' and among her 'strong memories'. Although Philippa cites her as a significant writing teacher, it is worth noting that Mrs Dyson does not model the process of writing at all –indeed she does not do any writing. Rather, she shows herself to be a creative person and a performer, able to bring a story to life. In this, she is an inspiration rather than a guide.

She did, however, offer some guidance to Philippa as she wrote. Philippa's only memories of teacher intervention in her writing, involve Mrs Dyson, and the lessons learnt resonate even with Philippa's adult writing. The following example gives a sense of collegial support from a fellow writer:

'...someone said, 'Oh, what's your name?' and the other one said 'Hi, I'm Barney', said Barney. And she [Mrs Dyson] said 'well if you've said 'I'm Barney you don't need to put 'said Barney' because it's there'. And I was like 'ah'. So that was kind of like my first, you know, "show don't tell", I guess.

Philippa felt strongly that such interventions were addressed to her as a fellow story-teller, the fact that she composed stories of her own being important to her credibility as a mentor. Mrs Dyson is also the only primary teacher credited with scaffolding the early stages of her

work, by giving her 'comic strip pictures' help her structure her work. Certainly in her accounts of being helped by Mrs Dyson, Philippa casts herself in the role of confident writer seeking to extend her skills.

At secondary school, Philippa says that teaching became more rigorous, though her assertion of this seems based more on what seems likely, rather than any detailed memories, as she finds it impossible to remember any skills-based lessons.

One event deemed 'really useful' seems to have arisen from a happy coincidence. Feedback on a returned assignment labelled Philippa's efforts as 'too terse', while her friend's was deemed 'too flowery'. Without further help from their teacher, the two girls worked through their drafts together, each learning from the style of the other. The complementary needs of the two girls fortunately enabled what could have been a discouraging critical incident to stimulate learning thorough peer support.

She is able to identify two more definite contributions to her development as a writer. The first was 'learning how to critique poetry in a kind of a more analytical way', something she found she enjoyed; the second, her involvement with a writing group led by a writer in residence.

Influential adults

The writer in residence (whom Philippa chooses not to name) worked with a group of about ten students, visiting locations such as the nearby docks and then meeting in the library where the students were able to share their ideas. As Mrs Dyson (but possibly no other

teacher) had done, this writer engaged with the students as they wrote their drafts, encouraging and challenging them over their choice of words and giving direct advice on what aspects were successful and how other aspects could be improved, as well as helping with editing.

Getting to know a writer in this way is something Philippa sees as inspirational, opening in student's minds the possibility that writing is 'a profession' and an activity that is not just to be done in school under the direction of a teacher, but can be freely and enjoyably undertaken at any point in one's life. As with Mrs Dyson, it appears that this writer's importance as an example to follow is at least as great as that of his role as an instructor.

But beside the direct personal contribution made by this writer Philippa speaks very positively of the way in which the group of young writers was able to work together and support each other, sometimes on their individual work and sometimes working together on a text:

'Talking through ideas with other people was really good [...] you'd see that if you did put [your ideas] with other people's ideas you could improve it and make something that was really good all together.'

As well as working on their own individual themes, the group also wrote a pantomime collaboratively.

Maybe because of the relative closeness in time, or maybe because of their more exact focus on aspects of literacy, Philippa's memories of her secondary teachers are both sharper and more positive than of their primary counterparts. She remembers one teacher who was quite strict and gave her a sense that she needed to get things right in the work she did for

her and another who shared her great enthusiasm for literature by decorating her classroom with 'cool posters [...] of different plays and things like that', and by taking groups to performances of Shakespeare.

Later, in the sixth form, Philippa had her interest in reading further stimulated by one charismatic teacher, Mr Hooper. Mr Hooper made an impression by challenging his students with controversial statements (e.g. 'Shakespeare is rubbish') and encouraging the examination of texts through drama and creative writing. He also deliberately widened her reading experience beyond the exam syllabus, something Philippa appreciates. This experience may have contributed to the detailed and analytical way she approaches her own writing today. Again, what Philippa emphasises is these teachers' personal commitment rather than any particular skill, knowledge or process she learnt from them.

Being a writer

Philippa does not hesitate when asked if she considers herself to be a writer, as for her this means that one writes, wants to write and loves writing:

'It's just if you love it and you want to write then you are a writer. So I always think of myself as a writer, yeah.'

However, when pressed, Philippa refines her assertion that 'anyone who writes can call themselves a writer', by saying that the writing needs to be creative, in that it communicates a thought or idea to someone else, though she also does not want to impose publication or even, *in extremis* having any readers at all 'some one who keeps a journal could consider themselves a writer'; writing itself is the important thing.

As a young adult, Philippa's sense of identity as a writer was clearly high, as immediately after graduating (in English Literature) she felt able to dedicate six months of her life to the writing of a novel, which she then sent to a literary agent. Now, some years into her teaching career, she readily lists her current, varied writing output, which includes unpublished novels for children and young adults, some shorter fiction and poems. Of this, only one piece of short fiction has been published, on a webzine a fact that does not appear to discourage Philippa from continuing to write at all. She does also write a teaching blog which reads, as one would expect, like a reflective journal of her teaching, giving the impression that the principal audience is herself. One wonders why a vehicle of reflection needs an audience at all (though, admittedly, solipsism is not unknown on the worldwide web), but the fact that it is called Miss _____'s Blog suggests an original intended audience of her pupils. In the event, not much of the content seems likely to be of interest to them, however. It is interesting to note that when she lists her output, she defines much of it in terms of its audience (children and young adults).

She sees herself as a fast and fluent writer, rapidly producing a first draft but then spending much more time editing and revising. In fact, she gives the impression of drafting so quickly that the text almost runs out of her control.

'I'd just sit down in the evening, just write for about 2 hours just like as fast as I can [laughs] I just like get.. all the words out and erm so you just find the story developing in a way maybe you didn't expect it to, you didn't plan it to kind of do what it does but sometimes it follows the plan, sometimes kind of you go, 'Whoa, how did that just happen?'

Her strategy for dealing with writers' block, which is to 'just [...] keep writing' reflects this energetic approach.

Despite her obvious energy and enthusiasm, Philippa has not always felt her writer identity quite so securely. She spoke of a relatively fallow period of some ten years during which the birth of her baby and the start of her teaching career severely restricted the time she could give to her art. In the interview, Philippa gave the impression that this period was precipitated by the painful experience of the rejection of her first novel submitted for publication. On reflection, however, she realises that she had in fact continued working on her second novel, and that the demands of everyday life had been the deciding factor.

Like her writing, Philippa sees her writer self as a work in progress, always developing and improving; After a first novel she describes as 'nowhere near good enough' she talks of a steady improvement in the quality of her work, comparing her development from book to book to the process of improving drafts:

'I think every time you do it you get a bit better It's just sort of things like that, so you get the whole story and that done in the first draft and then you really polish it up and craft it into a really good piece of work the second time through, probably like the fifth time through or whatever [laughs]'.

In fact she declares herself dissatisfied with all her work ('there's always been something I thought could have been better'), but in a way that suggests she feels it is within her power to improve them. What Philippa says about dealing with her self-diagnosed shortcomings as a writer gives the impression that she is happy to confront challenges to her writer identity and maintain that identity intact.

Audience

While it remains clear that Philippa (like her primary school teachers) sees herself as someone who can 'just write', she is equally clearly determined to improve her skills as a

writer, and she does make a number of references to the role of other people in supporting this aim. In the first draft of this chapter I picked out several examples of her apparent approval of the role played by others in, in various ways, supporting or encouraging her writing. Philippa's written response to the draft categorically rejects some of these statements and in general plays down the part played by others in her writing. For example, she says I was wrong to infer the importance of audience from the fact that she referred to her work in progress in terms of its intended audience, (e.g. 'the next one's meant for teenagers') and that she was planning to write about a 'teenage space pilot'. In her response she explains that she had cited audiences merely as an easy way of explaining what she was writing, and that the space pilot story was motivated by a desire to write about a female pilot, with the audience being a 'secondary' consideration.

However, audience response, or at least reception, is mentioned throughout Philippa's account of her writing life. Her early efforts were rewarded by her parents' encouragement and 'show[ing] it to their friends' and she does express the view that positive feedback to be an indispensable motivator:

'if no one had said 'Oh that's good' you'd kind of think, "Oh I'm not doing very well", don't you?'

At school she obviously valued being singled out as an exceptional writer, having her work displayed and entered into competitions. As an adult, however, she writes that only recently has she been brave enough to show her work to others ' she has in recent times found at least one opportunity to publish and declares herself 'really proud' of a piece of short fiction she had published on-line. The fact that none of her novels has been published makes her feel 'sad', but in the face of publishers' rejections she refuses to be despondent, realistically

accepting the shortcomings of her work, rewriting major sections and most importantly being motivated to improve each successive novel, and so become a better writer.

In the examples above, motivation is supplied by virtue of readership (she is proud that her work is being read) or general approval of a text (she is proud that her work has been accepted by a web-publisher, or for classroom display), but there is another way in which other people have played a role in her writing. Throughout her writing life, Philippa has appreciated more detailed responses to her work in progress, and even, in her younger days at least, intervention. The questioning and advice of Mrs Dyson and the writer in residence fall into this category, as do the discussions of the group led by the writer in residence.

For Philippa as an adult writer, this role is played by a writers' group to which she belongs. She has chosen a group she describes as 'for [...] shy people', where she finds everybody responds positively to others' ideas and efforts. She has deliberately avoided the kind of group where she might expect sharp criticism and where, as she implies, ego and rivalry may be more salient than the collaborative quest for literary perfection:

'sometimes people don't always have your best interests at heart'.

The importance of this group lies in its role in the initial planning of her work, giving her the impetus to start writing, and she does not share drafts in progress with the group. As a group, they do not comment on the writing itself, but just on 'the plot and ideas' and even these Philippa tends to keep to herself, as she feels that sharing ideas runs the risk of 'diluting' them. She is happier responding to other peoples' ideas. It seems then that role of the writers' group for Philippa is to give quite general support and encouragement, and perhaps generate or develop ideas at quite a high level. This impression is intensified by her

description of more structured activities, such as a 'consequences type game designed to scaffold the development of plot and character ideas, which feel quite school-like.

Philippa writes that she did not enjoy these activities, though she does speak positively of the experience of similar activities undertaken as part of a group for 'writing teachers' which she attends at her local university. In this case, the primary purpose is to develop empathy for and understanding of the children she teaches, as they experience these aspects of the school curriculum.

With the possible exception of her reaction to the literary agent's feedback, which in the interview she cited as the main reason she stopped writing for ten years, she seems able to deal with criticism of her writing, though on the evidence of her choice of writing group, it also seems that she may contrive not to put herself in the way of criticism.

The forum in which she does share work in progress is her classroom, where she reads sections of her work to her class. Again, the engagement seems to be on a general rather than a detailed level, but she does acknowledge this it is motivating.

'I read a bit to the class and they quite liked it, so it was quite good, I'll try and finish it.'

One other event in her writing career does amount to peer-writer support, albeit of an informal nature. The protracted fallow period mentioned earlier came to an end when Philippa found herself working in a year group team with another teacher who was a passionate writer. Philippa followed her example in writing sample texts for use in class, an

experience which ‘really sparked something in me and gave me back the desire to write again.’

Philippa regularly draws on less personal sources of external support. She talks with enthusiasm about developing her ability to create plots on the basis of guidance from a screenwriting website and also takes part in the web-based *National Novel Writing Month* (National Novel Writing Month, 2014), which sets demanding but motivating targets (in all, the production of 50,000 words in 30 days) but also provides rewards, in the form of certificates. She uses another web application, ‘Wordle’ (www.wordle.net) to check whether she has overused any words or phrases, and acts on the results.

The discrepancies which she articulates in some detail later of this chapter between her conception of herself as a writer and the picture of a writer implied by the National Curriculum are not perceived as a conflict in need of resolution and simply dismissed as ‘a bit strange’.

Philippa’s teacher identity

Being a teacher

Philippa’s teacher identity is to the fore in much of what she says. In particular, she often passes judgment on her childhood school experiences in the light of her current conception of teaching, frequently expressing disapproval of what she portrays as an undemanding, *laissez-faire* curriculum. Although she remembers enjoying the freedom to write as she wished at home, at school her admittedly hazy memories are of boredom and ‘not being stretched at all’.

As a teacher, she clearly believes that ‘the children have brilliant ideas’, but that ‘the teaching of skills’ is essential to enable them to express themselves more clearly and effectively. In this she is happy to declare her allegiance to national policy:

‘I always follow the strategies I’ve never kind of gone away from anything that I was supposed to be doing erm and just kind of... teaching it well, hopefully.’

She believes that teachers have an essential role in teaching writing, helping children develop in a way impossible ‘if they were just doing it by themselves’. She sees her role as providing clear guidance on how to write, and then giving continuing support.

Subject knowledge

Philippa identifies two areas of subject knowledge as particular strengths in her teaching of writing: knowledge about language and appreciation of the value of high-quality texts.

She attributes her grammatical knowledge to her pre-teaching experience, beginning with her English literature degree and extended by work as an editorial assistant and language-focused study for her PGCE, as well as to more recent professional development activities. She loves literature and sees writing as, in the main, arising from reading and so ensures that she reads frequently to the class. She usually keeps a book, unrelated to the class’s formal literacy work, from which she reads every day ‘just for enjoyment’ She stresses that she always reads whole texts rather than extracts. She also ensures a good stock of books for children to choose for independent reading, both at school and at home, so as she sees ‘a diet of good literature’ as an essential foundation for their writing

Practice

Philippa says she sees the role of the teacher as the development in children of a set of skills, and in her mind skills development precedes writing itself. Only through acquired skills can the writer express him/herself. Philippa sees her function as giving skills and knowledge to learners.

'you need to build up your writing skills and make you able then to write the things you want to write. So I think, er if we didn't do it in that way, I don't think they'd learn as well and they wouldn't be able to write for themselves'

Learning is seen as progressing in stages, with basic skills acquisition preceding more sophisticated understandings. She expects her Year 5 class to have acquired 'most of the basics of punctuation and things like that'.

A sequence of learning ideally begins with a model text ('really quality writing ') which Philippa provides for the class as a starting point for 'trying out the skills and then applying it'. Over the following three weeks or so, children work from these texts, in the first week 'reading and analysing lots of examples of the text type' in the second, 'trying out the language and sentence types, trying out ideas and getting feedback' and in the final week 'creating their own independent work.' (quotations from Philippa's comments on my first draft)

Philippa is at pains to ensure that writing always takes place in a meaningful context; a lot of time is spent on reading stories for enjoyment, talking about stories, what they mean and the feelings they evoke and exploring them through drama activities. Much of this activity is, as is mentioned below, reminiscent of a 'creative writing' approach. However, the progress

of lessons seems in principle to be in a bottom-up direction, with most of the explicit teaching focussed on low-level vocabulary and grammatical patterns. For example, vocabulary is collected in class using responses to (meaningful) stimuli such as pictures and extended by using thesauri 'so they get a really good bank of words'. It is worth noting that this is not simply a matter of progressing through time towards more global concerns, since the final feedback children receive will include a good deal about low level matters.

Sentence structures judged appropriate to the topic in hand are offered as models.

'...last week we were doing 'starting with an -ing verb' so erm like "gasping for air, he turned to see what was behind him ..."

This is presented as a grammar exercise, (children complete several similar sentences) but there is an expectation that the structure will occur in children's composed texts, in the case of this example, a (Greek-style) legend.

This link between features and texts is not surprising given the National Curriculum's genre-based approach (one with which Philippa seems very comfortable). The sentence work just referred to arose from the study of a version of the story of Theseus and the Minotaur:

We looked at lots of myths and we looked at What makes this a myth? What themes are there? What are the characters like? How do the plots work? What kind of language do they use? What kind of sentence types are they using? So in this one we found they used a lot of kind of short sentences for effect to create kind of surprise and then they'd have these '-ing' verb ones to create tension.

In the first draft of this chapter I questioned the extent to which children really are the ones who identify these features and how much the learning is scaffolded, suggesting it would be an interesting matter to investigate. Philippa's later comments reveal that the structure was in fact one she had identified a year previously, when working on the legend of Robin Hood,

and one which she herself had identified in the chosen text. Perhaps the use of 'we' in the quotation above indicates a persistence of child-centred discourse in primary schools, even when children's agency is minimal.

Philippa portrays the process through which writing is done in her class as a social and interactive one. She talks of 'hearing what [children] have to say', using 'all the children's ideas' and 'appreciating everybody's contributions and celebrating it'. Her contribution to this implied dialogue is 'good feedback' and 'quite a lot of marking'. Her aim is to 'help them improve it', in part by letting them know 'what's really good about their writing'. It would be interesting to observe her (oral and written) feedback to pupils to see the extent to which 'really good' features correspond with, on the one hand, curriculum level targets and, on the other, vocabulary and structures introduced within the sequence of lessons.

She cites several instances of learners contributing actively in a social context. As well as the collection of vocabulary referred to above, drama is frequently used to help generate and share ideas through talking with partners. This use of drama is again reminiscent of a creative writing approach, and Philippa gives examples of other practices which fit this style of teaching, such as the use of pictures and poetry to evoke a mood rather than supply vocabulary and language structures.

A form of whole-class writing is a strategy frequently employed. Having rehearsed a topic, Philippa begins by asking for ideas, which she writes on the board, and then early in the process looking for ways of improving the words already written.

'then [...] it's like how can you make this better ? So like, what could I add to this sentence to make it more effective so, make it his red eye was kind of staring at us. 'Well is it red? What kind of red?' And they're like "scarlet eye", you know really developing the ideas that way.'

So far, so learner-led. In the next kind of intervention, Philippa takes back control.

Then I'll say, 'Right, so now here I think I'm gonna have one of those '-ing' verb sentences, so what should I have? What can I have as an '_ing verb'?

Philippa chooses one of the proffered sentences ('well I think that one sounds good') to include, then the class continues drafting in the same way. It may be that the children feel some kind of collective ownership of a text generated in this way, but the element of teacher-guidance, with its keen interest in specified formal features is clearly felt.

Overall, the model of teaching and learning presented in Philippa's timetabled lessons seems to be a strongly teacher-led one, and whilst she presents herself to pupils as a fellow-writer, it is clear that she is to be seen as a more experienced and more capable fellow-writer, able for example to support children as they write their drafts by supplying them with words from her superior vocabulary.

'They'll say, [...] "what's a good word to describe rough fur that's all messed up?" and I was like "matted?" and they're like yeah, matted and off they went.'

She appears to be a guide, a collaborator in the sense of 'more knowledgeable other', and certainly someone who is in a position to make judgments about their work.

In the interview she is explicit that her role is to give children very precise directions to follow and to require a specified outcome:

'saying specifically, 'this is what I want you to achieve, here's how you can do it'.

Sentences produced in preparatory exercises are expected to be used.

'You don't just let them go off and write any sentences that they want, you say 'here's an example of a really good sentence structure that is effective for showing such and such' like erm when we were doing Robin Hood stories like 'Shocked, Robin span around, little knowing what he would see'. And you explain, you know, 'Look, if you've got this verb at the front it tells you how he's feeling, then you see what he's doing and then that gives you a bit more information and you say look how good is.. that's really interesting that will help to improve your writing if you use those, so let's try some out and then let's see you use them in your own writing and just kind of really directed like that...'

However, on reading her own words, Philippa feels they do not represent what actually happens in her classroom, which is that the class collectively analyses texts, looking for 'examples' and that after discussion and practice on the whiteboard or in rough books children are free to evaluate the structure in question for themselves and it is made very clear to them that there is no requirement for them to use it in their writing.

It is difficult to get to the bottom of a matter like this. Certainly Philippa's original account can be summarised as 'we (teacher and class together) identify a sentence type, we practice the sentence type and then children (mandatorily) use it in their writing'. Children are on the whole, eager to please their teacher and do not need to be compelled to follow a pattern which is clearly championed within a lesson. They are also quick to learn that it is writing that meets pre-set criteria which gets assessed as 'good' or 'improving' or 'Level x'. (see the discussion of Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) grids, below.) If the judgment of 'improvement' is only made in terms of the presence of certain linguistic or literary features, then children will learn to spot those features as a key part of what they are expected to learn. During the interview I did get the feeling that non-compliance was not really an option; in fact Philippa's first response to the question 'what about children who resist?' was

to explain what she does for children who 'don't have an idea', as if other grammatical ways of expressing a given idea are simply not possible.

Philippa's pedagogy, as described above is predominantly text-centred and highly teacher directed. Although, as she points out, this approach is prescribed by the National Curriculum, supported by the school's 'very clear expectation of exactly what will be taught' there is no suggestion that she is teaching this way reluctantly. On the contrary, she shows great enthusiasm for the approach and pride in its outcomes. However, she also professes great respect and admiration for the writing which children produce without close direction.

In the early years of her career this appreciation engendered a learner-centred approach, in which story-writing ideas were generated collectively by the class with children then being told 'off you go and write the piece'. Philippa describes her rationale at the time as 'I'll explain it through and they'll sort of just do it'. With hindsight she sees this as a misguided way of working, one which does not give the young writers adequate support. As evidence, she refers to two occasions when she asked classes to write a myth about why kangaroos jump. On the first occasion, early in her career, she implies that the resulting writing was disappointing. Setting the task to another class a few years later, this time giving 'more modelling and practice' led to 'much better results'.

However, Philippa acknowledges that her text-centred approach does little to encourage children to develop their personal voices as writers, so in addition to her class teaching, Philippa has for some time run a writers' club, open to all the KS2 children and operating during the lunch hour. The club is popular: more than half of the school's Key Stage 2

children regularly attend. Children have free choice of topic and apart from supervising and making practical arrangements, Philippa's role is limited to giving support such as 'help with speech marks' and general encouragement. She also encourages the emergence of peer support.

'... they'd be like reading out little sections to each other, making each other laugh and erm you know, they enjoyed that, they were like 'ah that's.. I really like what you've done there yeah', they are really positive about each other's work.'

She suggests that free writing in the writers' club helps in building children's skills: they love it and it helps them to develop their skills overall., Here the flow is counter to that of her lessons, with free writing (texts) coming first and 'skills' (attention to lower level features) following.

When the club had been running for some time, Philippa tried specifying a writing topic ('a summer poem') and a *modus operandi* ('collect your adjectives together and look, this makes a really good poem') and soon learnt that 'they weren't as into it' as they had been. However, they 'loved it' when they were told again 'you can come and just write whatever you want'. Philippa attributes this behaviour not so much to children valuing their freedom of choice and approach, but rather a desire to do something different from what they are used to in class.

She gives examples of language features which have been taught explicitly in class emerging in children's texts generated not only in the immediately following lessons (as might be expected) but also in the writers' club:

'They were like talking to each other and talking it through and saying 'Oh what about "the salmon pink sky peeped over the horizon?" and "no let's put in another ...er the salmon pink tipped with peach" and they were like you know doing Talk for Writing, like by themselves, independently'.

Her classroom approach, with children working towards clearly specified goals produces, in her opinion, more satisfactory outcomes. Moreover, she argues that 'creativity is born from limitations' and that the constraints and, boundaries of a task may in fact stimulate imagination.

Despite her enthusiasm for the work of the writers' club it is clear that Philippa believes the highly directive approach of her official classroom lessons results in writing of higher quality and greater satisfaction for her pupils.

'The children are achieving a lot more and are a lot happier with what they're doing'.

She says this judgment is supported by the evidence of National Curriculum assessment results. It is, of course, impossible to say whether these improvements are the result of class teaching or independent writing.

Much of the discussion above rests on a tension between a focus on children and their interests and a focus on achieving outcomes specified by the National Curriculum. Philippa's approach closely reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum and associated guidance and she is clearly happy to conform with them. Her practice is now focussed on teaching skills explicitly 'one by one', but she also asserts, 'it's got to be creative It's got to come from them'.

One example of her practice seems to address this apparent contradiction:

'For example, we have been writing instructions - this had to be taught (Philippa's emphasis). My way of making this child centred was to look at my class's interests (animals and monsters) which led me to give them the task of writing instructions for how to look after the animal or monster of their choice - they had the skills to do this

but could choose all the additional ideas and detail from their imagination. I see this as very child-focused.'

This leaves content to a limited extent in the hands of the learners (assuming every child in the class is interested in animals or monsters) while form is as specified by the teacher, and in its turn, by the curriculum.

Philippa does deal with formal issues which arise out of children's texts in progress, but she also articulates very readily a clear agenda for teaching those features which she and the National Curriculum agree that children need to know:

'I think children need teaching erm, how to use commas properly ah, where to put commas, children need teaching erm, what connectives are suitable in what kinds of sentences, how to use them, they need to be taught how to use a connective at the start of a sentence and then to put a comma after the initial clause erm they need to be taught erm like er how, the difference between past tense and present tense, future tense they need to be taught first person and third person'

As well as teaching writing skills, creating a social environment for writing and supporting pupils as they develop their texts, Philippa includes the role of 'motivator' in her responsibilities as teacher. This role involves inspiring and enthusing children, both through simply being a writer to be emulated but also by showing her excitement at their work:

'when you're excited about something they get excited about it as well, don't they, I think. '

In addition to these strategies, Philippa also uses a good degree of extrinsic motivation, based on National Curriculum criteria. She says that the use of APP grids¹, which list for each pupil what s/he needs 'to achieve in their writing' have the outcome of making children

¹Assessing Pupils' Progress. Examples of the grids can be found at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110809101133/nsonline.org.uk/node/20683>

‘really love their targets’. Once individual targets are identified –it may be that a child must ‘use more adjectives’ or ‘use more commas in a list’ -they are linked to images of rockets on the classroom walls and children ‘move up as they get their target’. Again, children are said to ‘really enjoy’ this procedure.

Writing linked to the Nano Wrimo project involves self-set targets and stickers as rewards.

This extensive use of extrinsic motivation strategies might be seen as indicative of a lack of self-motivation on the part of the children, arguably due to a low degree of learner agency. That inference does not, however, sit well with Philippa’s repeated references to her class as energetic and enthusiastic writers, nor with the high attendance at the writers’ club.

Changing perspectives

Philippa found her initial training (PGCE) valuable, and in particular it ‘vastly improved’ her subject knowledge. Her account in the interview clearly articulates her current philosophy and also refers back to earlier beliefs, such as ‘Oh, you don’t need to teach grammar’ and an enhanced respect for children’s ownership of their work, which she now recants. Despite the fact that in the early days of her teaching career her pupils were enjoying writing to the extent that they were choosing to write at home, and parents reported that they were ‘really inspired’, with hindsight Philippa feels she was not ‘bringing out the best in them’, and at some point ‘sort of saw you’ve got to be more structured with them than that’.

She attributes her adoption of a much more directive form of practice approach to the teaching of writing to the influence of one man, Pie Corbett, the author of printed and video materials which formed the basis of an LEA training session which she attended. Clearly she

finds several of his books for teachers (she mentions in particular 'Talk for writing' (Corbett and Strong, 2011)) to be of great practical value in planning lessons. Overcoming her reluctance to take control of writing away from her pupils, she was persuaded that Corbett's 'directed and specific teaching methods' could result in real improvements in the quality of children's writing. She says that when she adopted these methods in her classroom she saw an immediate effect.

In respect of her classroom lessons, it is interesting to note parallel changes in the national policy climate. For example, she talks of a change in her approach to grammar teaching as a change in her understanding. Having, in the early years of her career, rejected any notion of the need to teach grammar she talks of later changing her mind 'because I don't think everybody does just pick it up and it needs to be sort of explicitly taught'. As with her shift in perspective over the need for explicit and specific skills teaching, in the interview she gives no reason for this change of mind beyond 'but then I sort of came to think 'yeah you do''. In her later comments she gives a more detailed explanation, that the change was prompted by her appraisal of the grammatical structures children were using (and she is at pains to differentiate this from National Curriculum results) and that she explored other possible approaches through discussion with colleagues. She also reflects that technology was a factor, since the arrival of an interactive whiteboard enabled her to display shared writing more easily. I am left wondering whether the change of heart is an 'authentic change' occasioned by a personal recognition that, in the face of challenge, earlier beliefs are in some way lacking, or an 'inauthentic change' at the level of behaviour rather than conviction (Muchmore, 2001, p.106).

Having, in the early days of her career, considered grammar activities boring, and the knowledge itself unnecessary to young writers, she is now able to articulate a number of aspects of writing (all specified in the National Strategies) which she believes can be improved by explicit language knowledge, including use of commas for various purposes, the marking of clauses, use of connectives and the distinctions between past present and future tenses and first and third person.

If at first Philippa saw herself as following detailed patterns set by Pie Corbett, it is clear now that she has adopted this kind of approach as her own. Whereas previously she would look for suitable activities in books or on-line, now she habitually develops her own activities, something she describes as 'a big change'.

Philippa appears as comfortable and consistent in her self-perception as a teacher as she does with her writer identity and the clarification of her understanding of the role seems to have increased her sense of security. The only doubts she expresses about her work arise from any conflict between her own conception of good writing and what the National Curriculum requires her to teach, noting merely that the contradictions are something 'strange'. She deals with this through giving her pupils the little creative leeway the formal constraints of the curriculum will allow and by providing alternative writing opportunities outside the classroom. She appears to have arrived at this pedagogy without reference to most of her own schooling which, by her account included little direct teaching or support for writing and little by way of encouragement and motivation. Only the memory of Mrs Dyson is perhaps perceptible in her highly visible writer persona.

Philippa's writer-teacher identity

Writing and teaching

Clearly Philippa's writer and teacher identities are both strong, and they come together when she presents herself as a writer to the children she teaches. Philippa consciously makes use of her writing identity in school, and believes that her students view her as a committed writer who loves writing in her spare time. Furthermore, she is confident that this knowledge inspires some students to wish to emulate her:

'a lot of them can then see like 'Oh well I could do that as well' and a lot of them do want to be writers'.

She is aware of the distinction between an 'independent writer' and a 'school writer' a difference which, at least in hindsight, she can relate to the experience of childhood, when she enjoyed the 'freedom to write' at home, whereas at school she remembers being 'bored and not stretched at all'. This distinction is not wholly convincing, as she attributes her negative assessment of school writing to being 'left to get on with it', a condition which, even if not encouraging or stimulating does involve a degree of freedom.

Her first response to my question 'Do the children you teach see you as a writer?' is to say that they probably do, because they can see her Nano Wrimo (National Novel Writing Month, 2014) targets and certificates displayed on the classroom wall. She seems to be at pains to show her pupils not simply that she is a writer, but that she is a writer in the same way as they are, working on structured tasks with extrinsic support and motivation. Although an independent writer in her out-of-school life, she chooses to present herself to the children in her school, at least partially, as a school writer.

Philippa is also aware of the difference between her own writing practices and how she is expected to teach children to write. She describes some of the guidance and direction teachers get as 'completely contrary to what you want to do as a writer'.

'Like I'm having to teach children to use loads of words for 'said' and use loads of adverbs whereas as a writer you really don't want to, you trim out all those words and you've gotta let the dialogue do the talking so I'm kinda like I'm saying these things and I'm thinking 'aah' [breathing in!] [...] it just, it feels wrong in some way, like kind of giving them all this advice that you know actually, if they wanna like write stories later they're gonna wanna do something completely different [laughs] it's a bit strange.'

In her later comments, Philippa rows back from these remarks, saying they apply only to story writing, when her role in respect of most pupils is to prepare them for a later stage in their life when they will predominantly be writing essays and reports. This feels less than convincing, as essays and reports do not characteristically include dialogue or even 'loads of adverbs'.

In this matter, the teacher identity prevails, and Philippa rationalises her decision by thinking of this as an immature version of writing which her pupils need to master as preparation for later development:

'but as like young writers I guess they need to use those as they haven't quite got the skills yet to do the dialogue, and then later on they'll learn that they don't actually need so many adverbs and flowery language.'

There is also a degree of tension in her feelings about assessment. Speaking about the external assessments, which she undertakes annually, and to which her own pupils are subject (at the hands of markers external to their school) and have to be prepared for, she says:

'I sometimes feel when I'm marking and and assessing and things and you know, like, 'Have they used all these types of punctuation then you're like you know, it's sort of like

'hunt the punctuation' in a way, cause I've just been marking a load of year 6 SATs and it's like 'Yes, tick tick tick, you get mark, points for this, have they used some adverbs? There's some adverbs, there's some adverbial phrases yes yes yes and you kind of look at it as a kind of erm jigsaw of different bits rather than the whole piece.'

She goes on to say that in her opinion the quality of writing of the 'whole piece' tends to be good, but she obviously has concerns about the validity of the criteria she is being asked to apply. And if the touchstone of 'quality' is the number of adverbs shoehorned into a piece, is it surprising that the direct instruction to include more adverbs results in higher 'quality'? At the time of the interview it was Philippa's hope that plans to assess grammar through a separate test would result in a 'more holistic' approach to assessing composition.

Being a school writer

There are several aspects of Philippa's experience of writing, which show some similarity with the writing experiences of the children she teaches. Examples include her use of personal targets and the support she gets from fellow writers in her writer's group. Philippa's analytic, genre-focused approach to teaching has parallels in her own writing life, where she acknowledges the value of using explicit structural rules learnt out of the context of her writing. She talks, for example of learning much about structuring narrative from a website focussed on film structures.

Her membership of a university-based 'Writing-Teachers' group represents a more conscious attempt to explore for herself what her pupils experience. The group undertakes focused activities, such as writing poems, sometimes to a prescribed framework, collecting 'interesting words' and reading finished work to receive comments from other group members.

'It's nice cause you know how the children do feel cause you do want to read out and share what you've done if you've done something good and you're proud of it you want

other people to..to hear and then like give you feedback on it.. so you've put yourself in their place'

There are obvious parallels between the activities of this group and those of her (adult) writers' group, but whereas structured activities take place occasionally and in quite a relaxed way in the adult group, in meeting of the teacher group, sessions are always structured so that 'it is kind of like lessons'. This is hardly surprising, as a major focus of the sessions is on developing activities for use in school.

Reflection

From the evidence of the interview, Philippa is deeply committed both to teaching and to writing. For both pursuits she expresses (to my mind very sincerely and credibly) great enthusiasm. She has devoted extended periods of her life to writing and persists in finding time to write alongside her demanding teaching job and bringing up a child. Her ready answers to most questions suggest that she has spent a good deal of time reflecting on her practice as a writer, and her answers regarding teaching give a similar impression.

She says that she writes quickly and fluently, but then her work goes through many stages of redrafting. This is different from the practice of Andy, who appears to limit his redrafting by taking great pains over each draft, including the first, and Paul, who portrays himself as rather negligently failing to undertake much-needed redrafting. She calls on on-line sources to both inform and discipline her writing practice, but seeks very little help and support from other people. She is motivated to write without any prospect of her work being read, but is pleased when it does reach an audience.

As a writing teacher she shows greatest commitment to the quality of what children produce, a quality which she fosters through carefully planned study of texts to be emulated, engagement in drafting with her whole class and a system of extrinsic motivation based on personal target setting. This pedagogy, together with its implied definition of 'quality', is strongly in keeping with the prescriptions of the National Curriculum, its assessment and associated Strategies. Philippa personally believes this pedagogy gives the best results in terms of children's writing and learning. Aware that this approach does not provide the best context in which young writers can develop a personal voice, she also runs a very well-attended writers' club during the school lunch hour. As well as offering two contrasting approaches concurrently, she also tells of a much more learner-centred pedagogy in the earlier years of her career.

Being a writer contributes to her teaching in a number of ways, from the motivating effect of being able to share her work and talk enthusiastically about it, to the application of her wide subject knowledge of language and literature. In school, she presents herself as a writer who adopts the kind of *modus operandi* she expects her pupils to follow, for example, setting herself targets. In this she is going further than Andy and Paul in offering an identity to emulate, making it easier for children to follow the detail of her behaviour.

Philippa describes herself as 'quite a private person' and seems rarely to have sought the help of other people in her development as a writer. In her writers' group, for example, she says she is much more likely to offer advice to others than to look for help with her own ideas, which she fears might be 'diluted' if she did. Despite this personal aversion, she is pleased to observe children in the writers' club spontaneously sharing their work and solving

problems together, and one reason for writing as a whole class is to enable the pooling of ideas for all to use as they choose.

The one person (Pie Corbett) she identifies as an influence on her pedagogy, does so through setting out in detail a very explicit approach to teaching, whereas people who influenced her in her childhood seem mostly to have done so on the level of inspiration and identification (*e.g.* Mrs Dyson, the Writer in Residence). In her teaching she consciously uses both strategies: she inspires through her enthusiasm, sharing her work and visibly being a writer, but is also keen to guide, direct and instruct. The purpose of her whole-class writing sessions is for her to demonstrate various techniques which she purportedly employs in her own writing, though her description of such sessions suggests a greater emphasis on targeted words and structures than on writing practices. It is in the former sense that she uses the term 'modelling'.

In her personal history, her teaching and in her writing there seems to be a bias towards the analytical. At secondary school she found an analytical approach opened the door to poetry criticism and as an adult writer she has benefitted from explicit analyses of text structures to improve her work. There is no doubt that she believes an analytical, genre-based pedagogy supported by targets based on identified language features is the optimum way of teaching writing.

When Philippa talks about either teaching or writing she appears to be totally committed to each. In her comments on the first draft of this chapter she explained the relationship between the two as follows:

'Teaching is my job and vocation - writing is something that I love to do in my spare time.'

Writer agency seems a prominent characteristic in Philippa's account of the way she writes. She chooses topics which interest her and writes freely and fluently, producing a great flow of words, uninhibited by thoughts of pleasing an audience. These qualities seem to have underlain her early pedagogy, and the creation of the writers' clubs, where children made it plain that they did not wish to be directed to write on particular topics in particular ways. Philippa does not, however, interpret their behaviour as the expression of a desire to write freely *per se*, but rather simply of a desire to do something different from what they do in class.

In talking about her current classroom teaching, Philippa does refer to elements of learner agency. Aware that the form of children's writing is highly directed and prescribed, she endeavours to set tasks which give them some choice over content. The examples of writing assignments that she mentions do, however suggest that even this choice is quite circumscribed: for example, free choice of animal when writing an animal creation myth. Philippa says she begins whole-class writing with the open question, 'How do we start things off?'. This gives the impression of freedom of choice until we remember that the invitation comes after several lessons spent dissecting teacher-selected texts. She also implies that it is the children themselves who 'discover' interesting and useful sentence structures in texts, but it later emerges that the example she gives is a pattern she had introduced herself. When it comes to target setting there is no pretence of learner choice; on the basis of past achievements in respect of National Curriculum levels, children are told 'this is your target you've got to work on'. She is convinced that her mix of enthusiastic presentation and close

direction enables children to write well and also makes them 'a lot happier' –presumably than children in her earlier classes.

The question of Philippa's own agency is an interesting one. She is clearly highly self-motivated to write and does so in ways that she has chosen for herself, and has since early childhood. On the other hand, when she looks back at her primary school writing experiences she is disparaging about what she perceives as a *laissez-faire* regime which did nothing to improve her work. As a teacher she is happy to follow the detailed prescriptions which apply to her pedagogy. She recounts how this has not always been her position but, as already discussed, her insistence that she simply changed her mind over such matters as explicit grammar teaching bears further scrutiny.

Philippa presents both her writer and teacher identities as works in progress. She knows that she can improve her texts through revision and believes that through this process she will, over time improve as a writer: in this she has something in common with Paul. As a teacher, she knows that she has changed her way of working over the years, whilst retaining some constant elements to her approach. These changes seem either to be unexplained, apparently (but improbably) on a whim or the result of an (unacknowledged epiphany, so it is difficult to speculate about the paths her future development might take.

Philippa is aware of her separate writer and teacher identities and sees them as mutually beneficial. Where there are conflicts, such as when the curriculum's demands on young writers are at variance with her view of good writing she seems willing and able to sacrifice her beliefs in favour of the official line.

Philippa has much in common with Paul and Andy. She has a lifelong writer identity and like them feels almost compelled to write. As teachers all three are keen to present themselves in a variety of ways as models to emulate. Where Philippa diverges from the two men is in her respect for the prescribed curriculum and her enthusiasm for school-like writing practices; this is despite freely acknowledging that some of the things she is required to teach do not sit well with her own knowledge and understanding of writing.

Despite these differences Andy, Paul and Philippa appear as quite a homogeneous group of creative writers, who are committed to the point of being driven. They stand in many ways in contrast to the remaining two writer-teachers, Elizabeth and Claire.

7

Elizabeth

'I am a good communicator. And I do it through writing [...] I've done a lot of work with people to help them to be clearer in their communications and so on [...] I think that's what writing is about, actually.'

Elizabeth began teaching in mid-1960s and has had a varied career in teaching and educational research. Writing has been important to her throughout her life, but it only became a professional activity relatively late in her career. Most of her output is for academic and professional audiences, but she has begun to write fiction and poetry for her own pleasure in more recent years.

It was originally planned that I would interview Elizabeth at her home, but circumstances made that impossible and I interviewed her by telephone. In the event, two interviews, each lasting almost exactly an hour were necessary. Despite the risk of 'distance' posed by the means of communication, Elizabeth was relaxed and open and it was possible to establish what felt like a good rapport. She was happy to approve the first draft of this chapter.

Elizabeth's conscious perception of herself as someone entitled to call herself a writer is something which has emerged relatively recently. Her experience as both a writer and a teacher has allowed her to reflect on the place and processes of writing in her life and in the lives of those children and adults she has taught to write, and she is able to articulate a wide-ranging personal understanding of how writing works.

Elizabeth's writer identity

Early Experiences

Elizabeth is hazy about her earliest memories of writing, but has more to say about reading, though initially mostly in terms of her literary environment. She remembers her mother as a 'great reader' and that 'there was there were always books in the house'. The first reading event she recalls is listening to her father telling bedtime stories, though as well as reading from a book he often made up and told stories of his own.

Elizabeth's home literacy experiences seem, on the whole to have been meaningful and creative. She was an avid young reader.

'Oh I was dead keen on reading, I mean I was always in trouble because I was never, you know, could I lay the table and I was always in the middle of a chapter. I mean I can remember, school holidays, probably when I was nine and ten, just reading. I can remember, you know it's funny you remember the chair you were sitting in and everything and er I read and read and read.'

The range of her reading, in part determined by what was available in the home, included books she describes as 'quite old fashioned' and 'moralistic' as well as 'a lot of the classics writers'. The first author to be remembered by name (in fact the only author Elizabeth mentions throughout the interview –though she comments later that she did not in fact figure largely in her reading), is Enid Blyton. Another significant memory is her father's imaginative story telling. Although she describes him as 'not an incredibly imaginative man',

he does seem to have had a gift for modifying the familiar world ('[the stories] were always about people around') in a way his young daughter found enormously entertaining.

'he told me stories, I mean the ones I remember were all about ahm, the head.. this very strange headteacher that I had and she rode a bicycle and she wore a hat (laughs) he used to tell a story about you know how the monkey got you know, got her hat and things like that'

Perhaps not surprisingly, the young Elizabeth became a writer of narratives. She and her friend would act out the Blyton stories they had read before Elizabeth committed them to writing. This was at the age of 7-9, a period when Elizabeth 'can remember all that time writing', including 'some stories just for myself', and keeping diaries.

Her fiction writing was actively encouraged by her father and supported by the collaboration of the rest of the family. One Christmas, for example, Elizabeth's father decided that the family would produce a magazine. Elizabeth herself 'wrote stories all about animals and [...] people who lived together', while her brothers, among other things, wrote reports on cricket matches. Elizabeth identifies her own particular contribution as fiction, while one of her brothers was the artist. Parental support extended beyond encouragement and facilitation to include direct inducements, with Elizabeth's father offering the sum of two shillings and sixpence if she could complete her diary for a year, a commission Elizabeth fulfilled.

This early experience prepared Elizabeth for school as she was both 'used to [...] the idea of stories' and remembers 'going to school on the first day and seeing the letters of the alphabet round the room and knowing what those were' as she'd learnt from her parents and older siblings 'that there was something to do with letters and reading and

understanding...' Her earliest experiences of school literacy she remembers as the formal business of learning letters, a contrast to her home experience of stories and enjoyment.

Throughout the interviews, Elizabeth made frequent references to her understanding of writing as involving on the one hand skills which she describes as 'mechanical', such as the abilities to spell, write neatly and punctuate, and a second, more meaningful element which she refers to at different times as 'communication', 'creativity' and 'content'. Most of her primary school memories relate to the mechanics of writing. Her memory of early writing is uncertain, but she seems to have begun in a very formal way, copying letters from books, and continued in that vein, with a great deal of 'very boring writing' involving sentenced based exercises. Some of these, involving supplying missing words, Elizabeth remembers enjoying.

Spelling and handwriting figured prominently in the writing curriculum, and 'the actual physical thing of writing' is what Elizabeth remembers as the element distinguishing home writing from school writing. She is particularly disparaging about her regular homework task:

'We had the most awful thing which was every night this was from about 7 to 11 I brought home 10 words which I had to write out 3 times in that double lined very old fashioned double lined writing with all that curly writing.'

Elizabeth presents herself as a lifelong natural speller, 'just kind of able to learn them'. Handwriting was the cause of much greater frustration and she remembers being taken to task for not being neat enough, or allowing her letters to slant backwards. In fact, it is her view that it 'wrecked the whole thing of trying to write' that her teacher's attention was on these surface features rather than the meaning expressed in the text, and she still, literally, bears the scars.

'I have the most terrible bump on my finger still cause I held the pencil far too tight and I think that I can remember that sort of hurting my fingers hurting after writing and it still is quite uncomfortable sometimes when I write I have to really think about how I hold the pencil ...'

When she eventually moved on to grammar school she found it bewildering and frustrating to be told, 'we don't want any curly writing.'

Elizabeth lists the subjects other than English for which she remembers having to produce 'a lot' of writing. Although these tasks presumably were not lacking in 'content', they seem to have been perceived as just another kind of drudgery, a judgement which probably extends to writing about the headteacher's pet topic of the royal family. Even story writing was experienced as a heavily directed, and in the later primary years, (eleven-plus) exam-focused task.

'that kind of now you've got to write a story but I think we were always told what story we had to write and I remember the 11 plus, you know we were told we'd have three choices or something and having to make the choice of what you were going to write, it was very difficult.'

Things do not seem to have been much better at Elizabeth's first secondary school, with 'an awful lot of writing' to be done nightly for the various curriculum subjects. There she also faced an even more explicit focus on the formal features of language; the grammar schools of the period still favoured the study of grammar, 'so your writing was always about analysing, writing and parsing'. At this stage of her education, Elizabeth lost faith in her powers as a writer, feeling, in response to the particular writing demands on her, 'I can't do this. I had a lot of I can't do this'.

Building an academic identity

All of Elizabeth's published output can be described as academic writing. Later in her life she took definite steps to becoming an academic writer, but it is clear that the academic world and its standards were of great importance to her from an early age. It is also clear that her academic and writer identities are closely bound together.

The importance of learning is something that Elizabeth seems to have been aware of from a very early age. Both her parents held education in high regard, perhaps in part because neither had experienced as much of it as they would have liked. Her father 'hadn't had a lot of opportunities', while her mother, although she 'came from a [...] background where she had had education', 'she was a girl and didn't get as much as her brothers did, you know, it was just not considered as much....'

Elizabeth's father taught her that 'you must work hard' and he always made plain his pride at her academic achievements. However, another consistent 'message' he gave, that it was wrong 'to stand out in the crowd' may, she feels, have had a limiting factor on her achievement and self-esteem.

'So there were the two messages really, one was that sort of academic stuff was important. Erm and the other thing was, but you're only just, you know just sort of like everybody else. I'm not quite clear now cause I think it's quite interesting cause I think there was a double message'.

This may be why, even though she says she has 'always looked up to people who are academic', it has taken a long time, including many years studying and then working in an academic field for her to consider herself to be one of them.

A disappointing performance in the grammar school entrance exam seems to have got her off on the wrong foot in secondary school. Having expected to pass comfortably, she 'just scraped the eleven-plus and got in'. Although she feels she settled into her new school fairly well, she was soon to start in another new school, when her family moved from the north of England to the south. This was clearly an alienating experience and Elizabeth describes herself as 'a bit disengaged' at the time, as she 'didn't want to come at all.' Having fallen under the influence of a 'best friend' who was 'very very clever' and 'came from a family of [...]well known writers', but also 'very naughty', Elizabeth was encouraged to 'not do much work', with predictable consequences.

'when we had to write, of course I had nothing to write about because I hadn't learnt anything, but she had because she, just by osmosis.. so she came top of the class and I came bottom.'

Having considered and dismissed the idea that she'd actually been 'very naughty' herself, Elizabeth concludes that her real shortcoming was to have been one of those children who don't get noticed and was not recognised as an individual.

'I was one of those children [...] which I've seen in class, who is there and is doing all right and you don't pay a lot of attention to and I think that was what I felt happened to me in school, that actually, nobody cared very much about me as an individual erm and then you sort of think well I'm not really very good.'

Elizabeth seems prepared to bear the responsibility for her lack of success (and its circular relationship with her self-esteem) both at the time:

'what I felt was I wasn't a terribly in.... this may be wrong but I didn't think I was a very interesting child'.

She stresses that she means that she did not feel herself to be of interest to the school; at home she was 'much loved' and 'very much held my own there during discussions and arguments'. However, to this day she holds herself responsible, rather than her teachers:

'So it wasn't the teachers or anything I think it was about my own sense of learning really.'

As a teacher, Elizabeth shows herself to be keen to In this she seems to be judging her teachers by lower standards than she would herself. Given her morale-sapping experiences, it does not seem surprising that later in her schooling she seems frequently to have compared herself unfavourably to her fellow pupils, and being in a class with 'some very, very clever people' was something she found 'quite difficult'.

From what Elizabeth says it is easy to infer an academically competitive school environment. For example, she without thinking identifies who was first, second and third in her English class, and it certainly appears that she was intimidated by them. Elizabeth makes a link between how she felt at that time and her father's belief in the virtue of not standing out.

'being average was what I thought I was, and I think that's a very bad thing, and I think I've always felt that you know I was quite average in what I did.'

Elizabeth tells of a fairly recent meeting with an old schoolmate, and one of the few details she recounts of their conversation is 'I said well I didn't go to university like you'. Apparently this academic 'failure' in some way marks her (at least relative to her school peers) to this day. Conversely, in the same encounter the old friend reminds Elizabeth of a time she was rated highly in an essay competition, and this is something she does not recall noticing, even at the time.

' "when they gave the results, there was first second and third and there were these three girls," and she said, "and I remember, you were fourth". I said, "I don't remember being fourth at all, I just don't remember that" [...] and ever since. I've thought you know, that is so terrible - that fourth was actually pretty good.'

Like many talented young women of her era, rather than going to university Elizabeth went to teacher training college. This was in Cambridge and in Elizabeth's recollection, many of the university students she encountered gave the appearance of being 'much cleverer than me'. At this stage her confidence in her own intellectual capacity, and in particular in her powers as a writer does not seem to have been high.

'I was was often with people who I always felt were much brighter than I was erm and I think that sort of meant it's taken me a long time to be confident that what I write is perfectly all right.'

Later study with the Open University seems to have marked the start of the emergence of Elizabeth's academic self- confidence, through a recognition of her skills as a writer. She summarises typical assignment feedback as 'might not have got it all but you write very well'. Now she was beginning to feel that this appraisal could be accurate, but in her next academic move –onto an M.Phil degree course- she fell back to her old self-image as academically inferior, 'because they talked and they sounded great, and erm, so I thought, gosh, all these people are doing much better than me.'

Ultimately, however, this course served as a personal academic validation, not only because she ultimately achieved the highest mark of the group, but because of the feedback she received on the quality of her work; it gave her the confidence to write her first book and become a published author.

None of this is to say that Elizabeth stopped seeing academic success in competitive terms, but this time, 'I[she] was one of the top people on that course' and she felt she was at a turning point. In hindsight, she can see that confidence as a writer has been something that has come very slowly.

'that's only sort of later that I've begun to feel much more confident about; it's taken me a long long time,'

Interestingly, this has not been a simple change of heart, just involving feeling differently about the same ideas. A factor in the epiphany has been a change in Elizabeth's thinking about what constitutes good writing, and in particular the concept of simplicity. For a long time, readers had told her that the reports and other texts she produced in her professional life were 'simple to read', an appraisal which to Elizabeth 'felt like a bad thing'. 'I think I saw simple as being almost childish.' Now she was being told that the strength of her thesis was its simplicity, which lies at the root of the clarity of her writing.

'I suddenly realised, actually that's what I'm good at, that's what I can do [...], I'm quite good at putting things down clearly.'

Whether it was the fact that the assessment was supported by a grade, or that it came from someone whose academic credentials she respected, or for some other reason, this time Elizabeth was able to accept the compliment. However, the fact that she describes herself as a clear thinker and writer rather than a 'philosophical person' suggests that she still refuses to see herself as a 'real' academic and she freely admits that she is never completely confident of her work:

'whenever I hand in something I never feel it's quite good enough'.

In one (very important) sense, there can be no doubt that Elizabeth is an academic writer –it is, after all, how she makes her living. However, she does still express this belief in fairly diffident terms: ‘in some ways I probably am quite academic.’

Influential figures

Elizabeth’s progress as a writer and an academic seems to have been influenced, for good or ill, by a number of important individuals. Her father, as already noted, fostered her interest in stories and encouraged her academically. Her mother offered a model not only of a committed reader (still reading at 98) but also of a communicative writer, regularly corresponding with a sister overseas.

In her schooling, the only influences recorded before her mid teens are peers: the friend who encouraged her not to work, and the ‘very very clever people’ whom she found intimidating. She does not mention any significant teacher influence until she was sent to boarding school at the age of 13 or 14, where she met Miss Steele.

Like many influential English teachers, Miss Steele was distinguished by her passion for literature and her exacting standards: ‘she was absolutely adamant about our writing being really good’. Many of Elizabeth’s peers seem to agree that this particular teacher was responsible for their own achievements as writers.

‘I went back to a memorial service for her a year ago and the number of people who went back and said “that’s where I learnt to write”...’

From Miss Steele, Elizabeth learnt a respect for deadlines, but more importantly, it seems to be through her teaching that she began to prize clarity in writing. Miss Steele had a very direct way of dealing with unclear text:

'She would underline things which we you know and she'd write in the margin and I can still see it now and I always use it when I'm reading, you know editing my own stuff, in big red biro and in capital letters she'd write BAD'.

Elizabeth insists that she was happy to accept this kind of criticism, as Miss Steele had a 'very detached' relationship with all her students, showing no interest in them as people, 'she was interested in us as writers and as people who loved literature'. Because of this, Elizabeth felt completely comfortable that the comments were directed at her writing rather than its author. She also insists that she benefitted from more positive kinds of attention:

'I can remember one of the things she did for me was she said, "Elizabeth Mason you're the only person in the class who can use 'and' at the beginning of a sentence and use it correctly", so I felt really good about it'.

By Elizabeth's account the whole class was motivated by her, all wanting to write well. Personally, Elizabeth says Miss Steele had a 'huge influence' on her, not only as a writer but also as a teacher of writing. As already noted, later in life, Elizabeth's academic self-esteem seems to have rested greatly on the judgment of those assessing her work.

Gender

Gender is mentioned as a factor in Elizabeth's identity on a number of occasions. It is first referred to in connection with her mother, whose education had not been considered so important as that of her brothers. Whether this had any impact on Elizabeth's self esteem at the time is not clear, but a persistent sense in society that girls should not be expected to

achieve highly may have been a force directing her towards a teacher training college rather than a university.

Elizabeth's response on reading the above paragraph is to point out that there were far fewer university places to be had at that time (1961) even than later in the decade and that her (girls') school routinely sent students to Oxford, Cambridge and London University colleges. She makes a distinction between the school's high academic aspirations for her and her peers and a society which had yet to catch up with the idea of women being 'clever or independent'. In Elizabeth's words, 'Finding a husband who would look after you was still very important.'

Despite sending some to university, according to Elizabeth the school expected most of its alumni to enter 'teaching, nursing or secretarial' employment, so it does seem that its ambitions for its students at the end of their school career were compromised in the face of society's expectations.

Moreover, her explanation of the way she was treated at school implies that this compromise also occurred at an earlier stage, and that the girls were not encouraged to have a high opinion of themselves:

'.. certainly when I talk to other women of my sort of era, many of us found that in all-girls schools there was very little praise. you were never, it was never quite good enough and I think quite a lot of people a lot of women have suffered from that [...] and therefore they never felt they were good enough....'

On her M.Phil. course, she was intimidated by the other students, many of whom were men, and although she laughs when she says it, and denies that she is now of this opinion she

admits that in the past she has thought 'that men were much cleverer than me'. In the context of the course she says this was 'because they talked and they sounded great'.

Elizabeth's teacher identity

Being a teacher

Elizabeth's experience of teaching, and of teaching writing in particular, is wide-ranging. She has taught upper and lower primary classes, children with special educational needs and literacy and communication skills to adults. In describing her experience as a teacher, Elizabeth gives the impression of being somewhat different from the conventional view of a teacher. She describes the special school she taught in as a place where she felt 'able to be quite alternative really' and not as 'teachery as you probably had to be in other places'.

She rejects the characterisation of herself as an 'outsider', instead stressing that she always preferred teaching the children who 'had difficulties', who were seen as the 'less able' or 'underdogs'. She reflects that special education was the context in which she felt most confident as a teacher, though paradoxically, also 'less confident because I felt the children weren't moving on and you know that was my fault probably.'

Elizabeth may not see herself as a 'teachery' teacher, but nonetheless she reveals herself to be committed to teaching and her students' learning throughout the interview. However, she found the ethos of her first school, where the curriculum favoured formal approaches and teachers' activities were highly regulated, particularly difficult to accept. In fact, at this time she considered leaving the profession.

Practice

It is many years since Elizabeth taught regularly in the classroom, so it is not surprising that she did not give a comprehensive and detailed picture of her practice. However, her reflections show that through her teaching she learnt a great deal about both literacy and how it is acquired and developed.

She reflects that a great deal of writing is done in school but that not enough thought is given to the reasons for it. She expresses concern that writing is used indiscriminately within the curriculum; teachers resort to quickly setting writing tasks without properly considering their value and their effect on children's morale.

'it's just part of going to school, you write. We do an awful lot of writing it seems to me without thinking'.

The nature of Elizabeth's writing teacher identity can be discerned through considering what she thinks is important in her teaching of writing. She clearly favours writing activities which children are able to recognise as purposeful; to illustrate how meaningful writing can arise out of a context she gives the example of her pupils composing sentences following the completion of artwork. So close is this link in Elizabeth's mind that she find it hard to remember the activities as distinct:

'it's not something that I remember as much as all the reading and the stories and the painting and things like that that it seems to be so much part of that I don't remember that being separate'

As a child herself, Elizabeth experienced decontextualised 'writing' when she was required to learn to spell words by copying them in isolation; as a teacher she rejected this approach by rooting children's work in their creative activities and by using real, professionally

relevant texts in her courses for adults. She has concerns about current practice in some classrooms she has observed:

'... year 4 I think, doing the second world war and were so bored, they had 3 words, 'evacuees', 'blackout' and 'rationing' and [the teacher] kind of talked about what those meant and then they had to write. Well I was with the TA who was with the, you know, children who aren't very good and thank goodness, she said, "Oh I had an auntie who lived during the war and she told a story [...] and I, who was supposed to be just an observer said, "Oh yes I remember rationing", so it all got much more interesting for this little group.'

She feels strongly that writers of all ages need to be writing about things in which they are interested and moreover that this is something that children do naturally from an early age.

Elizabeth expresses strongly the view that it is the responsibility of teachers of writing to teach their pupils to communicate clearly and believes that children should be motivated to write by the desire to communicate; they are 'wanting to tell people something'. The adults she taught were all seeking to use writing for more effective communication in their professional life and Elizabeth often gave her courses title like 'Writing and communicating' and taught formal aspects of literacy, such as punctuation, through activities which called on learners to use it in order to clarify the message of a text.

Elizabeth also talks about practices through which she helped very young children and children with special educational needs to unscramble their ideas prior to writing. In the special school, for example, she enabled children to rehearse their ideas through drama, while in the early years classes children often began with painting, drawing and 'pretend writing', before dictating a sentence for Elizabeth to scribe.

Perhaps thanks to the teaching of Miss Steele, clarity and simplicity are closely linked in Elizabeth's mind, and she describes her approach with adults as 'to get people to be as simple as possible in their writing'. To this end, she frequently required writers to limit their sentences to a fixed number of words. Many of the adults she taught had, in their professional writing developed a jargon-laden style which she tackled head on with lists of words and phrases to be avoided (she gives the example of rejecting 'utilise' in favour of 'use').

Creativity or formal skills?

Elizabeth's thoughts and feelings on the place of the teaching of formal features seem to have varied over the course of a lifetime's experience in writing and teaching. In her conceptualisation of an effective curriculum, the question of the place of 'the mechanics' recurs often, and appears to be problematic to her. She often refers to 'learning for the world' (*i.e.* acquiring skills and knowledge for practical purposes) and 'learning for pleasure' as opposites.

Creativity is a topic of some concern to Elizabeth. In her initial training, writing was presented as a creative subject, among other creative subjects :

'if you were doing erm you know you were acting out, doing some drama, doing some music, you might want to write a few things down, and I see that as being creative, or you might want to write the story.'

She is keen to extend her definition of creativity beyond conventional views of artistic activity:

'I think there's a real confusion about creativity being something where you make something or do something and that many people are very creative just in the way that they express things and they might express that in writing they might express that in words. Er they might express that in the way that they are as a person.'

She expresses some dismay at the approach to teaching writing in her first school, where English teaching was dominated by text books

'we followed books in maths you had to do, you know, a page. The children went through and the same with writing there was a lot of exercises which children filled in words.'

Elizabeth recognises a variety of writing which is purely creative and self-expressive, and possibly the province only of a special kind of person:

'writing almost for the spirit, you know, the creative bit and you know I've got a friend who says, "I may not get this novel published but I can't help it I've got to write it", there are those people'

On the other hand, she is well aware that writing is not always a creative endeavour, and as a skill is as necessary for filling in forms as it is for more ambitious compositions.

The desire to teach in a creative way was one of Elizabeth's reasons for leaving her first school. However, in hindsight she implies that the way she taught in the special schools she moved to was too *laissez faire*:

'I, you know, was taught this let the children, you know... it was very Summerhill.'

Elizabeth spoke with feeling about her dislike, as a child, of teaching which focused on the formal or 'mechanical' aspects of language. Perhaps because of this experience, Elizabeth was for many years, certainly during her years as a schoolteacher, antithetical to formal approaches to teaching writing. She says she that in her first school she 'disliked' working

under a regime which gave children credit for formal and mechanical aspects of writing and not their creative efforts.

However, her first encounters with adult learners made Elizabeth question her earlier classroom practice. Her students now were workers in local government and elsewhere who, in their thirties and forties, were climbing the promotion ladder but 'not able to write a report'. The fact that, in her assessment, they were unable to construct a sentence was, she felt due to their not having been taught at school how to use punctuation.

'That really brought home to me and I thought, "My God! These were the children that I was teaching in the 60s and the 70s and we didn't really teach them how to write.'

As a consequence, Elizabeth prioritised these formal concerns, addressing them directly in her teaching sessions.

More recent classroom observations have made her reappraise priorities once again. An observation of a writing lesson focused on the experience of World War Two left her disturbed at an approach to English which she sees as based on words taken out of context, and which fails to engage children's interest. She begins by accepting that there is a troubling tension between form and context:

'And it's a dilemma [...] at the moment I think all they do is, well they don't not all of them but a lot of them is they you know they do the words and they write the words but there's no real context.'

but then arrives at the conclusion that the two are not in fact incompatible and concludes by reflecting on the wider educational context:

'I think often that's where we've failed it was either, you know it's all creative and good fun, or it's a totally mechanical thing.'

The 'we' in that sentence seems to apply to the collective behaviour of the teaching profession, although over the years, policy makers have increasingly borne the responsibility.

With her adult learners, Elizabeth took a contextualised approach to skills teaching, stressing the need for language to communicate clearly and working with real texts, including the learners' own writing, even when focusing explicitly on particular features, such as punctuation.

Elizabeth's writer-teacher identity

Being a writer and a teacher

Of all the writer-teachers in this study, Elizabeth is the one whose writing and teaching lives are most clearly separated. Her confidence and career as an academic writer only began to grow after her work as a classroom teacher had come to an end. However, there is an overlap due to the fact that the subject of her academic writing is teachers and teaching. More importantly, she gives a strong sense that the qualities that make her a good writer are the same ones that make her a good teacher. The point at which writing and teaching most clearly meet in Elizabeth's narrative is in her consideration of clear communication.

'I am a good communicator. and I do it through writing and I do it through the training that I've done with people. erm and I've done a lot of work with people to help them to be clearer in their communications and so on [...] and I think that's what writing is about, actually.'

Elizabeth believes in herself as a communicator and attributes her effectiveness to the clarity of what she says and writes. She believes that, in itself, this ability makes her a good teacher, whilst at the same time, her knowledge and understanding of how to write clearly facilitates her meeting one of her principal aims, namely to help her students communicate well.

'as long as you know what you want to say I can give you the skills of putting that down'

Elizabeth's experience is that her own writing can help her clarify 'muddled' thoughts and in her teaching she gave priority to helping learners clarify their own thoughts through talk and writing.

I spent a lot of times saying, "What do you want to say?" "What do you want to say?" was one of my key phrases, because people didn't know, you know they were muddled, and so am I often, I'm often muddled.

Working with very young children and children with special educational needs she refers to practices through which she helped children reveal and organise their thoughts in preparation for writing. In the special school, for example, she enabled children to rehearse their ideas through drama, while in the early years classes children often began with painting, drawing and 'pretend writing', and completed their work by dictating a sentence for Elizabeth to write.

As a writer, Elizabeth shows awareness of her audience and she is keen to help those she teaches identify and appeal to their own: 'you do have to think about your reader all the time'. In her courses for adults, she encouraged learners to face up to the fact that initial thoughts are often muddled by getting them to make rough plans, draft fearlessly and be prepared to revise as often as is needed:

'you had a blank piece of paper and you had to write straight away and one of the things that I have really learnt is that I think I probably said this that there's always this jumble of thoughts in your mind and you have to put those down first before you can write and I think a lot of people didn't realise that and that was a big breakthrough for a huge number of people..'

She supported this teaching by taking in examples of her own drafts, showing revisions, for students to look at and expresses surprise that the adults concerned had never been taught the skill of planning when they were at school.

Empathy for learner writers

When working in early years classes, Elizabeth recognised the importance to children of writing as a means of making one's mark.

'writing their name was the big thing just to be able to write their name on a picture'

Writing one's name on a piece of artwork both signals ownership and identifies the artist with the artistry displayed. As writers become older, it is an entire text which represents the writer. Elizabeth is very sensitive to the negative potential of this

'so there was the thing of putting children's writing work up on the wall and of course some of it looked really good and then there were the others which were all sort of wobbly or not so good.'

and relates children's experience to her own sense of 'being judged' at a time when she 'never felt that my writing was ever very good.' She reports a similar issue with adult learners who were 'terrified of putting anything down on paper, because they felt they would make, you know, dreadful mistakes'.

While working at a special school she was impressed by the argument of a colleague who raised this aspect of writing to the status of an important outcome to be striven towards:

'she always said, "these children may have special needs but what I want them to have is real self esteem when they go out and the one thing they need to do is to be able to sign their name, is to walk into a bank she used to say and sign their name.'"

This changed her view of the importance of teaching the presentational aspect of writing, at least in the context of special education. In both interviews, Elizabeth showed herself to be especially sensitive to how learners feel about their writing and the way they are asked to learn to write. Although expressing oneself in writing entails risks of criticism and judgment, it can also be a positive experience. Elizabeth recalls the pride and excitement shown by young children when they are able to read back the words they have written, but she is also aware that if they are asked to write too often, the joy can wear thin.

'you did your picture now write a sentence underneath as a sort of hammer blow really, I've now got to write a sentence I've done what I thought I was going to do and now I've got to write a sentence'.

When she moved to teaching adults, Elizabeth identified the need to construct unthreatening activities for them at first, perhaps asking them to write just a single sentence, in order to overcome their anxiety at committing themselves to paper and thus revealing their weaknesses.

Ultimately, in Elizabeth's view, writing is an activity which leaves all writers highly exposed and vulnerable:

'Even competent writers are not necessarily confident about their writing. You're very vulnerable as a writer I think, actually, because you're really putting yourself on the line.'

Throughout her account of her teaching, Elizabeth gives examples of her sensitivity to learners' vulnerability and explicitly relates their experience to her own sense of 'being judged' at a time when she 'never felt that my writing was ever very good.'

Reflection

In some senses, Elizabeth's development of a writer identity has been a 'schooled' experience. Apart from her forays into creative writing, first during her primary school years and then after she had become well established as a professional writer, Elizabeth's writing has been of the academic kind, and her apprenticeship has been through following courses and then writing to commission. Probably more than any of the other participants, Elizabeth's writer identity is very closely linked with her academic identity, something about which she has not always felt positive. Perhaps because she viewed writing as the domain of the 'clever', for a long time she undervalued her skill in expressing ideas of all kinds in a simple, understandable way.

Confidence has played a significant role in her development as a writer, and something which grew relatively late in her career and required very active encouragement from her higher education tutors. Her earlier tendency to compare herself with the perceived achievements and prowess of her peers had not served her well. Given her personal experiences, it is hardly surprising then that she presents herself as highly sensitive to those factors which might deter learner writers from committing themselves to the page.

She is committed to the idea that teachers are responsible for ensuring their students (whatever their age) learn the requisite technical skills of writing, but also to the belief that

writing needs to be developed through authentic tasks which are purposeful, enjoyable, communicative and contextualised. When discussing these two aspects of writing she often presents them as opposed, but in her practice she developed ways of combining the two.

If she has a single core belief driving her as a writer and teacher of writing it is that the purpose of writing is to communicate and that communication is best achieved through clarity and simplicity. She prides herself on the clear way in which she communicates as a teacher, but more important to her is her ability to help learners express themselves clearly, and in turn to understand the importance of clarity and simplicity.

Elizabeth's writing has developed as a necessary part of her professional life and this sets her apart from Andy, Paul and Philippa, for all of whom writing came first, chronologically and still comes first (or in Philippa's case probably joint first) in terms of importance to them. To some extent, Elizabeth's writer identity is subsumed within her academic or teaching identity. This difference is not a lifelong one: before going to secondary school she seemed to have the same kind of drive to create stories as Andy, Philippa and Paul, but educational experiences which caused her to doubt her 'cleverness' seem to have discouraged her sufficiently to suppress her desire to write for several years. Paul also experienced discouragement during his secondary education, but not in terms of formal expectations, which he always exceeded. Elizabeth herself links her low self esteem to a school which made much of the successes of more 'clever' girls, a perception that expectations of girls were, in the years when she was in school, and her father's philosophy that it was wrong to 'stand out'. In recent years, perhaps on the foundation of her now strengthened writer identity, Elizabeth has begun to write and share with others, stories and poems.

It would have been interesting to explore her creative writing process with her, but her approach in respect of her professional writing seems more akin to Andy's with its emphasis on getting a text to be as perfect as possible. Simplicity, conveying the maximum thought and feeling in the minimum of words and through the clearest of grammar, can be the hallmark of poetry as well as of teaching texts. Also like Andy, she does not seem at all concerned to express directly her own identity through her writing. Where she differs from Andy is in always having a body of prepared information which she must convey; she cannot wait to find out what emerges from the text, she must know in advance.

In the close relationship between her writing and her teaching activities, Elizabeth also has something in common with the final participant, Claire.

8

Claire

'I'd say I'm a writer ... because I can teach writing.'

Claire is a young teacher in her mid twenties and in her fourth year in the profession, working in a medium-sized school in a village in the east of England. She has followed no other occupation, having taken the four-year B.Ed route into teaching, straight from school. At university she specialised in English language, though English or personal reading or writing do not seem to have been an enthusiasm of hers at any point of her education. She was born deaf and her condition was not noticed until she was three years old. However, it is her opinion that the condition had no lasting effect on her linguistic or other abilities.

As a teacher she works closely with one teaching assistant, with whom she obviously has a close professional relationship, and has developed a consistent pedagogy, with routines very familiar to the children she teaches. She and her teaching assistant colleague together attended a series of training sessions on the theme of 'Teachers and TAs as writers'. On the

basis of this involvement, her school has been designated a 'Writing school' and it was through the project's DCFS web page that I made initial contact with Claire.

Claire appeared reluctant to agree to be interviewed, though happier to allow me into the school to observe her teaching (which I did for a short time). She had prepared herself for the interview, making detailed notes on the basis of the interview schedule. She had even put some of the questions to the children she teaches (which meant she was able to avoid giving her own answer to some of the questions). She presented as quite nervous and her answers to many questions, especially in respect of her life history were quite short, despite often having been prepared. Contrastingly, she spoke very fluently and enthusiastically about her practice of teaching writing, and the influence of one particular authority in the field. Overall, however, Claire's was the shortest of all the interviews conducted, barely an hour, and this the shortest of the interview chapters.

Claire's response to the first draft of this chapter was simply 'it seems fine by me'.

Claire's writer identity

Writing plays an significant part in Claire's life, but mostly in the context of her professional activities. In her personal life she communicates with friends and family, occasionally through long emails but more often through shorter messages, texting and voice calls.

Early experiences

Claire offers no evidence that writing has ever been important to her sense of self. Like other participants, she has no memory at all of learning to write. She does, however say that she found writing easy and, without suspecting it herself, she must in fact have been considered an exceptional writer by her teachers, as in her final year of primary schooling she was entered for the Level 6 SATs assessments. This prompted Claire to realise that not only could she write, but that writing was something she found quite easy to do.

This degree of achievement is perhaps surprising, given that at the age of three it was discovered that Claire had been born deaf, so in her earliest years she had no opportunity to hear or learn spoken language. In her opinion, however, her early lack of hearing had no

bearing on her later education, as she 'just seemed to pick up what [she]'d missed' and her competence was comparable with that of her peers. There may, however, be some connection with the extent to which her speech encountered correction throughout her childhood, and maybe with her willingness to accept such correction. She talks of her mother correcting her grammar, describing this action as 'supportive'. When she was five years old her family moved to Yorkshire and inevitably she began to pick up the local accent. This gave her mother further occasion for correction (in this instance, predictably fruitless – Claire has a marked West Riding accent). Perhaps most surprising is her memory of having her English corrected by a German visitor, something she found 'a bit strange', not because a foreigner was correcting her native tongue but because, the person concerned could speak better English than she could.

Although she does not recall the detail of being taught to write, Claire is appreciative of her primary teachers' encouragement, which she describes as 'giving [her] confidence', and which included an occasion when she was asked to read out a story she had written in assembly. This response to praise is something she obviously feels to be important to her.

'I don't think I've realised this till this interview, I must be someone who works well from praise.'

At primary school she remembers writing stories and also doing a great deal of cross-curricular topic work, writing for the purpose of learning in a range of subjects, for example, history. She speculates that a diet of writing in context, rather than in lessons dedicated to the mechanics of writing, may be the reason she does not remember being taught. Her impression is that she did not have much freedom in the writing she did in primary school, on the contrary finding the tasks 'quite prescriptive.'

Out of school, she has some memories of writing at a drama club, something which did not require much thought as it 'came naturally'. Beyond thank you letters she remembers doing little writing at home, but she considers the way in which she was encouraged to read may have had a positive effect on her writing. When she was a very young child her mother would read her a bedtime story every night. As she began to learn to read, Claire would read parts herself, and over time her contribution increased to the point where she was doing all of the reading. Claire cites this as an example of how her mother provided a supportive environment for her literacy development.

As is the case for her primary schooling, she has few memories of secondary school writing, even though she continued to study English into the sixth form. She remembers being told that she was preventing herself from producing her best work thanks to a fear of not being neat, which was making her unwilling to edit her work.

Having 'done fine' at her comprehensive school, Claire had a less successful time at her sixth form college, which at the time she was there was at the very top of national league tables. In her words, she felt,

'I'm bottom of the class and so it knocked my confidence and so I kind of went off writing a little bit'.

She was particularly perplexed by the assumption that she should be familiar with technical aspects of language study, something which she had not previously encountered. She cites a lack of knowledge of grammatical categories (e.g. 'adverbs and verbs') and also how they relate to different text types. The problem went beyond not being able to do particular tasks she was given, as she found it hard to understand what she had been asked to do. She says

she did not 'know what really they were looking for', even though, in her judgment she could write well. One particular incident seems to have been particularly significant.

'I remember one comment and I don't know why this sticks out. I'd spent the Christmas holiday writing an essay and I thought I'd done a really good job and it came back and it said. "I think the Christmas pudding's gone to your head" and that really sticks out in my mind and I just think 'what, but..' and I still don't know why it wasn't right.'

This story comes at a time when her experience of school was characterised by teachers' negative comments and her own response, which was to think simply '[I] can't do it'. By Claire's account, it did not greatly shake her faith in herself as a writer, but it clearly affected her motivation to succeed at school and, as will be discussed later, it has had some effect on her conception of good teaching.

At university, she regrets choosing to study English language (rather than literature) as again the focus was on a technical approach to language, with a new emphasis on phonology, which she recalls as 'transcripts and writing down sounds'. As with her earlier study of grammar, she found this work not at all engaging and at the same time 'overwhelming' because of the amount of technical vocabulary. As with her experience at sixth form, the negative effect of this centred on her attitude to English as a subject rather than her capacity as a writer.

At this time she says she had no difficulty with the formal side of writing essays, concentrating instead on making sure the ideas she was expressing had been properly understood. She did however at this stage of her life adopt a number of habits and procedures, including the art of referencing and systematically reading and checking her work. The only guidance she received on writing came right at the end of her course, and this was not as helpful as she would have liked.

When she was working on her final dissertation, members of her teaching group had individual support from a teacher. Claire was happy to take this teacher's advice and respected her judgment. However, having been told 'this is looking great', Claire was very dismayed eventually to be awarded a mark of 60% which was 'just a 2.1', as she had interpreted the teacher as meaning there was nothing to be done to improve her work and the mark would therefore be in the first class range.

In general, her feelings about the lack of encouragement she says she received after her primary schooling seem to involve sadness and hurt.

'I don't remember constructive feedback since primary school and until working in this school.'

In particular, she is concerned that at no stage in her formal education does she feel she received the kind of feedback which would help her improve her work.

Claire makes little claim to be a writer, so it seems somewhat tenuous to think of that identity as being open to challenge. However, she does recount a number of incidents in her schooling (outlined above) when she felt under attack as a writer. In her adult life she expresses a certain lack of confidence with regard to some aspects of writing and as already noted, when writing a formal letter to parents she will seek a collaborator from the outset.

She professes no personal interest in writing, but neither does she express any particular aversion; writing is something she feels very comfortable doing as part of her everyday activities but is not something she would ever do from choice.

'I don't write outside of school unless I need to, but that's not through having a hatred of writing. I wouldn't choose to write a story on a whim.'

On a journey, for example, she'd prefer to read or draw. She does say that she would happily write for other people, finding the task 'easy' and even enjoyable, which perhaps suggests she sees no purpose in writing as an activity freely entered into. But she insists 'I wouldn't really write at home.'

In her private life, writing at any length is confined to long emails to her family, who live a long way away. She describes them as

'...very chatty, they're not.. correctly structured cause I just kind of write things as I think them probably miss out all my full stops'.

However, most of her communications are by phone and text message.

The first type of professional writing Claire mentions is modelling writing for children and she only mentions three other types: email, writing letters to parents and marking children's work, which she describes as, 'write for them, to help them write'. She says she lacks confidence when writing formally, especially in the case of letters to parents, and will often ask a colleague to work together with her both on the first draft of a letter and to check its final version.

Overall, the impression Claire gives of the place of writing in her formative years was that it didn't make much impression. It is her experience of pedagogy that gives rise to stronger feelings. On the whole, writing appears to be something which, when young, she just took in her stride and which, in itself, caused her no discomfort. But neither was she a great

enthusiast for writing, deriving no particular pleasure or satisfaction from it, nor ever doing it from choice. It is perhaps unsurprising then that outside of the professional sphere, writing plays but a small role in Claire's adult life.

Claire's teacher identity

Being a teacher

Claire presents as very confident of her teacher identity, speaking very quickly and fluently about the detail of her practice. So enthusiastic does she appear, that I was surprised to learn that a teaching career had not been a lifelong ambition, but something she had fallen into because, 'When [she] was at 6th form college [she] didn't really know what else to do'. She opted for primary teaching out of a sense of having no particular subject specialism, seeing herself as an all rounder. However, very early in her B.Ed course she realised that she'd made the right choice because she found that she loved teaching.

Claire's love affair with teaching began on her first teaching placement, where her 'wonderful' teacher-mentor made a big impression on her. She describes the process of learning as 'subconsciously' picking things up from her which she put into practice on all three of her teaching placements. She found this kind of practical learning far more important for her professional development than the teaching she experienced in her university where, she says, 'I don't particularly remember the lectures teaching me'.

The important lessons she cites as having learned in her placement schools are in general pedagogical matters relating to classroom management and positive behaviour strategies,

both of which she considers essential prerequisites for confident and effective teaching. She also identifies these as being among her current strengths, alongside a capacity to engage children in her lessons, to build mutually respectful relationships with them and to give them the 'confidence to try new things'.

Being part of a community of professionals with whom she can share knowledge and practice appears important to her. She says that her colleagues are 'key' to her classroom success. She instances her fellow Year 6 teacher, who is the school's English coordinator, as particularly helpful to her, thanks to her extensive subject knowledge but also to the fact that they always plan their work together. However, she clearly feels she is learning all the time from all of her colleagues.

When she talks about her own school experiences she often relates them to the feelings of the children she teaches now, and this gives the impression that she is an empathetic teacher. She understands, for example, when children are anxious out of a fear of making mistakes, as she had been as a child. Her anxiety at having to write a letter to parents she relates to children's understandable fear of the blank page and believes that if she can help them make a start on their work they will continue confidently.

She tells of times in her education when she either was not interested in what she was being taught or simply unable to understand what was required of her. For this reason she seems particularly concerned to ensure that in her lessons all children are engaged. Her experience of negative or unhelpful feedback has shaped her own response to children's efforts. Claire says her feedback is encouraging and gives specific advice on how work can be improved.

'you need constructive criticism but you need to tell the children how they can improve and I never felt I got that and so for that reason I struggled.'

Claire presents herself as reflective, saying she analyses every lesson to ensure she achieves her intended outcomes and looking for ways to improve it. She gives the example of finding a lesson to have been 'too teacher-led', in which case she will try to find ways of involving children more actively in future lessons.

In respect of language, she sees part of her role as being to use clear and correct spoken language. She actually says that she uses this register - not the language she uses at the weekend, or with friends and family – so that children can understand her easily. However, it seems unlikely that she would ever be misunderstood by the children she teaches (after all they will be as familiar with 'weekend' and 'friends and family' language as she is) and more likely that she is concerned to model the kind of English that children are expected to write.

Practice

The approach to teaching writing that Claire adopts involves well-established routines and habits, teacher modelling, whole class sharing of initial ideas, use of talk partners and independent writing. Much of this is accordance with to the model promoted by the writer and educationalist, Pie Corbett (*e.g.* Corbett and Strong, 2011).

A lesson will often start with oral or written language games with the purpose of stimulating children's imagination and engaging them actively in the lesson as soon as they come in through the classroom door. The games are often taken from the teachers' books written by

Corbett and are consciously linked to the theme of the lesson, for example by preparing children for formal writing with a game based on a particular sentence structure. With the whole class, brainstorming is a frequent activity, initially to build up a store of words and phrases but also to refine and develop early thoughts. Claire gives the example of finding adjectives to describe grass; she will encourage children to go beyond the obvious ('green') to find more original ideas. Another activity fostered in a whole-class context is magpie-ing, a technique by which children take, store and use ideas generated by their classmates.

When Claire talks about modelling writing she seems to be describing a process in which she, as teacher, acts as scribe as the class ostensibly creates its own text. However, it is also clear that Claire is intent on showing and encouraging the use of predetermined vocabulary and structures, for example, showing them 'what a powerful sentence may be'. She describes her practice as creating a text together, taking children's ideas and demonstrating how they can be 'put [...] into sentences'. She believes that working together in this way makes the experience for children 'more powerful'. So ideas are introduced by individuals but, by Claire's account, shaped by the class as a whole. The extent to which the teacher controls this process would be interesting to investigate; she after all, as the one with the pen, is the person who makes the final decision as to what is actually recorded. When she says, 'you take a child's idea and say "yep great, how about let's develop his?"', it does imply that at that point the idea's originator loses ownership of it. In this aspect of her teaching, Claire resembles Philippa and possibly Andy.

Claire also talks of using talk partners to work on ideas, presumably in a similar way and with the stated intention of enabling children to 'create sentences that they're proud of.'

The teacher guidance is visible and structured. The brainstorming may be highly specialised, for example, as in the lesson I observed, children might be asked to offer examples of a 'prepositional sentence'. In the case of this particular lesson, this was guided by a picture of a farmyard scene, so children could see images representing 'by the gate', 'under the shelter' and so on.

'and then it's going back to under the shelter and saying anybody look for some adjectives and just helping them dissect each part of the sentence and add bits to each part'

This is a very analytical approach to writing and at this stage of the process there does not seem to be much of a place for children's agency or voice.

It also appears that contributions are sometimes 'shaped' beyond recognition. Claire's reflection:

'you go along building on others' ideas and it's not making them feel, "oh, my idea was rubbish", [but] "it's all right, we just worked on my idea together, well done me for having the idea in the first place."'

appears to be a justification for the tactful rejection of some ideas and it would be very interesting to interview some children after just such an event, to see if they do feel pride – or at least identification-with suggestions which have been rejected or radically altered.

The modelling is often linked to a chosen genre, and the class will examine a particular text type with a view to reproducing the genre themselves. This involves looking in very close detail at 'the five key paragraphs' in a chosen text, trying to 'break it down' and focussing on 'key aspects of the language'. Having undertaken this analysis the next stage is 'creating our

own model together' before children are required to write their own example independently.

Independent writing is usually the final outcome, but there is much scaffolding along the way. From a model text, key features may be inferred and listed as 'steps to success'. These 'steps to success' are, in turn used to direct the construction of a new text. At the heart of the whole process is 'dissecting the texts to appreciate the structure'. This may sound a dry process, but in the lesson I observed, children appeared to enjoy engaging with it. Through regular whole-class work, Claire has developed a class of enthusiastic contributors, who spontaneously call out their ideas.

Although the form of children's texts is closely prescribed, Claire tries where possible to maintain children's interest and commitment by making the writing topic 'something that interests them'. For example, when the genre was 'complaint letter', children were encouraged to write a letter about something that had really happened to them, or at least has some relevance to their life. Andy and Philippa both give similar examples. As well as maintaining motivation, this is intended to help children ultimately become independent in their writing.

The starting point for writing is sometimes homework, for example researching the facts about a particular animal which can then, in class, be cast in the words and structures of a chosen genre. Claire sees this as another opportunity for children to write about something that interests them. Again this is very similar to a strategy used by Philippa. It gives children

a degree of choice over one aspect of their writing, but leaves their choice over forms of language very restricted.

Not all Claire's lessons follow this text-focussed pattern. She describes a sequence of lessons with a Year 4 class using approaches reminiscent of the Creative Writing.

'When I was in year 4 the activities were ... were much more creative [...] We pretended that dragons had landed and we found some You tube videos of dragons erm swooping past a school and then we went on a dragon hunt.. we didn't place anything out there but the children went 'oh this tree is bent over, it's obviously sat on there' and if you go round there's so much dragon -related things and then that's it. Year 4 they're instantly on board.'

However, she feels this kind of imaginative strategy would not appeal to the Year 6 children she now teaches, for whom she deems a more formal approach to be more suitable. She does not say whether she has in fact tried to work in this creative way with Year 6 students and it is at least possible that she has not been tempted to because her priority is to prepare these older learners for national tests in which imagination is not assessed.

Although Claire's approach may feel highly prescriptive, she insists that she is ultimately committed to the formation of free and independent writers. Asked if, in her opinion, it is better for a young writer to express effectively her/his feelings or opinions, or to write a text which matches the teacher's specification, she without hesitation opts for the former. She says her aim is independence, firstly on the highly practical grounds that her pupils will eventually need to be able to write without a teacher's support, but secondly because

'once they have that first aspect [independent writing] of them coming through as their writer, the rest will follow. The structure will follow.'

This view is however at odds with her practice, where structure comes first and independent writing a long time later. Moreover, elsewhere in the interview she says that the development of children's voice is an 'ultimate' wish, and something that can be fostered 'by showing them different ways of doing it'. *i.e.* by exposing them systematically to different text types. This order, model text first, individual voice at the end of the process is the one reflected in Claire's lessons.

Her account of how she structures her lessons over a three-week period reflects this trajectory too. She does not expect children to have a sense of agency or ownership during the first week of a teaching unit, as the focus is on analysis, whereas in the third week they feel they have the freedom to write a text which is in some ways their own. In Claire's words, 'You have to do that classwork to get to the independent'. The typical progression within and between lessons, from a supportive sharing of ideas towards individual working is something she attributes to the influence of Pie Corbett.

To overcome a common impediment to writing without direct teacher support, Claire has a strategy –again taken from Pie Corbett- to ensure that spelling problems do not inhibit the flow of children's writing. When they want to write a word but are uncertain as to the correct spelling, they are encouraged to make their best attempt and write a dotted line underneath it, as an indication that they need to return to the word later in order to make sure the spelling is corrected. Claire introduces the strategy through modelling her own occasional uncertainties, underlining dubious words as she scribes for the class.

One source of evidence for the success of Claire's teaching lies in what the children she teaches think and say about writing. The interview schedule I sent in advance includes a question asking the participant to speculate as to what the children in her class thought

were the qualities of a good writer. When I came to ask the question, I found she had already put it directly to her class, so she gave me their actual answers instead of her own speculation. The majority of the children's replies relate to formal matters such as correct use of capitals and full stops, the importance of structure and the 'need to know whether it's formal or informal'. All these depend on the metalinguistic ability to 'describe different language', which children identify as another essential skill. Writers should also be able to 'explain clearly' what they are writing about and 'give detail'. Children also mentioned some elements of planning, both for the sake of structure and because it is important to have time to think before committing oneself to the page and some personal and creative matters, namely 'good imagination' and 'relating stuff to yourself such as in a story and letter of complaint'. The great majority of these items are referred to elsewhere in the interview as things specifically taught or taught about in lessons.

Claire insists that children are visibly committed to their writing as they work, and that the fact that they always want to talk about it is further evidence. Thanks to this enthusiasm, positive feedback from parents and good National Curriculum assessment results, Claire is confident that children have 'massively succeeded' from her teaching.

Claire's discussion of her teaching appears always to assume that it is necessarily circumscribed by the National Curriculum, and she refers unselfconsciously to 'the lessons that we *have* to teach' (her emphasis). Initially, despite being strongly attracted to them, she was hesitant to adopt Pie Corbett's teaching methods as she would have to 'come off National Curriculum', something she describes as a big step and only possible with the backing of her headteacher.

Although she is clearly highly proficient at using Corbett's method, and convinced that it helps children succeed 'massively' as writers it is not an approach she feels she can use all the time as 'we have to follow the curriculum' something which, in her view 'has stopped me doing it the way I'd love to do it all the time.' However she says she is reconciled to this restriction as she finds Corbett's approach 'very imaginative' and therefore not suitable for use all the time, as children need to learn about 'other aspects of writing as well.'

Another way in which Claire has been able to express her confidence in her teaching skills has been in presenting herself as a model for other teachers, both in her own school, where she has led training days for colleagues and for teachers visiting from other schools. She has led training sessions for teachers from a number of London schools and received visiting teachers (and myself) in her classroom. Thanks to her work, her school is formally recognised as a 'writer school'.

Claire appears particularly secure in her teacher identity and she refers to nothing which diminishes her self-image as a teacher. She does seem to accept within this identity a number of controlling agencies, the greatest of these probably being, as already mentioned, the National Curriculum. Her frequent references to the limitations on her freedom over what and how she teaches now that she works in Year 6 implies a strong influence of national assessments too. She also speaks often about other authority figures, to whom she seems happy to defer. The most frequently mentioned is Pie Corbett, but she also refers several times to her headteacher, her year leader and 'our school' (as in 'that's how our school works'). None of these forces detracts from her sense of herself as a teacher; rather, she appears to see them as a necessary part of her teacher identity.

She refers to Pie Corbett by name around twenty times, using phrases like 'and this is very ... Pie Corbett where he says...'; 'I then taught children using the way that Pie Corbett likes you to'; 'That is another Pie Corbett project going on in the school'; 'When we were.. doing the Pie Corbett, he said....'

She credits Corbett with giving her the confidence to teach writing, thereby making a significant contribution to her writer identity. However, the truth of the matter appears to be that through Corbett's training she has developed not a stronger writer identity but a stronger 'specialist teacher of writing' identity, since whatever writing she now does, it is for the purpose of improving her teaching in some way.

When asked to identify the principles which guide her teaching of writing she says, without hesitation 'these ones' pointing to a printed set of Corbett's 'mantras' for teachers. It is worth noting that codifying his method in the form of 'mantras' shows Corbett's intention that it should be learnt as a set of principles by children, and perhaps by their teachers too. When asked a question, Claire would sometimes appear to reply with Pie Corbett's answer.

*'Pie is very 'we'll all work together we'll all get our ideas down'
'...the brainstorming, he is very hot on brainstorming'*

It is from Corbett that she has learnt to use a particular lesson structure, built on recurring habits and practices, which in turn, have their origin in Corbett's books and training.

Claire's writer-teacher identity

Most of the writing Claire does is for professional purposes, so her writing and teaching identities are closely bound together. In fact, she says she can only count herself as a writer 'because I can teach writing', and apart from informal communication with friends and family, the examples she gives of the writing she does as an adult are all directly related to teaching. She says her experience of teaching has helped her improve both as a writer and as a teacher of writing and she sees her confidence in the field to be closely linked with, 'helping the children get the best out of their work'.

The role of Pie Corbett in the forging of Claire's identity in respect of writing and teaching seems to have been highly significant. Claire attended Corbett's training during the first year of her teaching career and has used his methods systematically ever since. Speaking of that training, she says:

'this Pie Corbett course [...] has given me confidence to teach, which has then led to me feeling like a writer because then ... I mean if I wasn't a teacher I don't know when I would write, so it's given me that confidence to feel as though I'm a writer.'

It is worth noting that Claire does not say that she feels she actually is a writer, and in fact says that the only reason she writes at all is because she is a teacher. It does seem that she consciously adopts a role of writer for the purpose of performing it in the classroom, which is why she goes no further than to say '*as though I'm a writer*' (my emphasis).

In fact it is quite difficult to get her to talk for long about writing as an adult; the topic swiftly slides into aspects of teaching writing. The following answer is a response to a question about how she feels about herself as a writer.

'Much more confident since..... this course really. Since teaching as well cause then it's made you go back and check that you are teaching the right things and just.. and also going to year 6 and teaching the well er able children in year 6 I think has made me feel confident as a writer again, so I've come full circle'

Not only does this show that Claire only seems to think of writing in terms of teaching it, but that she is content to see her own writer identity enclosed within her teaching.

Similarly, when Claire answers a question asking her to relate the way s/he was taught to write (as a child) to the way s/he writes now, she very quickly reverts to the matters which are important to her teaching. She says that largely 'writing came naturally' (a statement in keeping with her earlier one that she has little memory of any experience of writing instruction), though she is able to identify a few useful skills, such as structuring essays, that she did pick up at school. She then goes on to list the things she's learnt about writing (largely from Pie Corbett's training) as things she wishes she'd been taught at school.

'I'd say quite a bit like prepositions and personification I've taught myself since teaching so heard of these words and checked what they are and taught myself and then used them but, I don't remember, for example at primary school, knowing what a noun and an adjective was.'

This is curious, as she revealed earlier in the interview that one aspect of her sixth form education which she was particularly unhappy with was the prominence given to linguistic terminology in language study. So although she is quite right to say that she was not taught these things in primary school, Corbett's training sessions were not the first time she encountered them. It is likely, however, that they represented the first time she saw a use for learning them.

As Claire insists that she writes almost exclusively in the context of teaching, when she says she 'uses' personification she must mean that she uses the device in her teaching. No doubt

she has always used nouns, adjectives and prepositions in her writing and is referring here to a tendency to pay attention to such words and the ways in which they might be used to contribute to a 'better' text.

She is very ready to acknowledge that she is able to draw on her professional knowledge in her own writing. On writing a formal letter she reflects

'We focus on so many aspects in year 6 such as sentence structures and variety of punctuation, I'll be thinking of what I would teach my year 6 in their formal letter writing and put it into mine.'

It is doubtful, however, whether literary techniques such as personification and a greater use of adjectives figure significantly in the bulk of her writing activities, composing progress reports, letters to children's parents or email messages to family and friends.

Her actual account of how she goes about writing a formal letter has many resonances with both her pupils' definition of a 'good writer' and her own typical lesson structure. At the start of the process she seeks scaffolding in the form of support from a colleague. She then talks of the choices she needs to make in terms of genre, sentence structure and vocabulary before finally revising her draft.

Claire presents herself as something of a 'born again' writer. Someone for whom writing was always in the background of her day-to-day life, but a skill largely taken for granted. Her 'rebirth' came with attendance at three training days led by Pie Corbett. Participants did a lot of writing themselves –poetry, stories and non-fiction on the successive days- and it is thanks to these days that Claire now feels able to call herself a writer. This writing experience is, however, very much a 'school writing' experience. In Claire's words, 'Pie

Corbett treats us as a class' and the experience she describes follows the patterns of her current classroom teaching very closely. So while she is now a more confident writer, she,

'wouldn't say it's increased [her] confidence as a writer outside of school because [she doesn't] write outside of school unless [she] need[s] to'

Reflection

I chose to include Claire in my final group of participants because she had been part of a government-supported programme called *Teachers and TAs as writers*. As such, she is the only teacher I have interviewed to have some kind of official status as a writer-teacher. Chronologically, she was a teacher before she in any way considered herself to be a writer and in the interview she presented herself as a teacher (albeit one who specialises in teaching writing) rather than a writer.

Even before the interview, there was some evidence of a lack of confidence to present herself as a writer. She only agreed to be interviewed at the third time of asking, though she appeared eager for me to observe her teaching. Having agreed to be interviewed after an observation, during the interview she diverted the subject to teaching rather than writing wherever she could, often by using answers she had prepared in advance, using the interview schedule. Where she referred to her early life experience as a reader and writer she spoke only of the processes of learning to read and write, never offering examples of writing for pleasure (in fact she explicitly said this is something she has never done) or the enjoyment of reading or any favourite books.

Her self-presentation as a teacher is a different matter. When given the opportunity to describe her classroom practice she does so with fluency and enthusiasm. Her references to

formative experiences in her early life often relate to instances of teaching and learning and she often explicitly links how she thought and felt at that time to the experience of the pupils she currently teaches. So, for example, she relates her heavily scaffolded approach to instances in her childhood where she felt teachers had let her down by not explaining a task clearly. The influences that she cites –her school placement mentor, her colleagues and, of course, Pie Corbett- also have a bearing principally on her teaching.

She was clearly wounded by some of the negative comments she received from her own teachers and is keen that her pupils should not have that experience. She also remembers the uncomfortable experience of floundering thanks to what she felt was a lack of guidance from teachers. She obviously feels that she was let down by many of her teachers. These experiences seems to have led to a tendency to a formalised and routinised kind of teaching based on quite detailed language analysis, even though the learning experiences on which she reflects most favourably are not within this paradigm. More than once she describes writing as something which ‘came naturally’ though it may be that there was more formal teaching behind her emergent skills than she remembers. However, she specifically recalls not learning effectively from lessons based on formal language analysis at various points of her education, and, as an undergraduate, does not consider she learnt a great deal from lectures. She shows no awareness that this assessment of the way she has been taught (and the way she continues her professional learning) sits somewhat uncomfortably with her own highly analytical and directive pedagogy.

Learning to teach (probably the most complex skill in her personal repertoire) was something she did through ‘subconsciously pick[ing] up’ ideas and practice from her teacher-mentor, while she says she has ‘picked things up’ from her school’s English leader’s use of

formal language. She names as the 'key' agency in her continuing professional learning her ongoing interaction with colleagues as they work together to plan their teaching. It seems then that the most successful learning she has experienced is through her membership of the teaching community of practice, rather than through formal teaching.

Of course, although highly directive, Claire's practice of teaching writing is far from being lecture-based. She begins by presenting children with models to emulate, but soon gives them scaffolded opportunities actively either to analyse those models or begin constructing their own examples. She also offers many examples of children learning from each other, for example through shaping a text composed together by the whole class or through engineering situations in which partners comment on each others' drafts.

If, through the use of a repertoire of embedded literacy practices, the children in Claire's class collectively form a community of writers, then it seems likely that the arrangement will foster literacy learning with the outcomes Claire is seeking. That is not to say that this is a community of practice in the same way as the teachers in the school form one, since the purpose of the classroom community is not to produce the best possible writing; rather, the purpose of the community is defined by Claire (acting as agent for school and government policies) as the reproduction of certain learning behaviours.

Through the interview, Claire shows herself to be thoughtful and reflective. For example, as she considered her answer to a question on feedback she said she realised (in the interview) how important praise was to her own learning, and also how little praise she had received after her years of primary schooling.

The most striking aspect of Claire's teaching is her adherence to the teaching model developed by Pie Corbett. She refers often to his numerous teachers' books and his rules and 'mantras'. Often I felt I could have prefaced a question with 'what does Pie Corbett say about....' and got the same answer.

With her unequivocal focus on teaching writing and her lack of any strong sense of herself as a writer in any non-professional context, Claire seems very different from all the other four participants in this study. However, in her enthusiasm to teach effectively all aspects of the specified curriculum she has much in common with Philippa, while her sincerely professed empathy for her pupils links her outlook to Elizabeth's.

9

Five writer-teachers

You're very vulnerable as a writer I think, actually, because you're really putting yourself on the line.'

Elizabeth

Whilst the five writer-teachers who are the focus of the substantive phase of this study have shown themselves to be distinct from each other in many respects, it is just as clear that there are strong themes which run through all the preceding five chapters. The diversity owes a good deal to the methodological strategy of selecting participants who broadly conform to pre-determined (and deliberately various) kinds of writer-teacher. Much of the similarity revealed is no doubt due to the similar circumstances in which all were teaching, and a number of enduring aspects of the nature of both teaching and writing. As can be expected in research of this kind, some similarity will also be due to the way in which the

interviews were framed, although as was explained in Chapter 3, a good deal was done to ensure they were each able to give their personal, individual account.

This chapter sets out to explore the principal themes emerging from the preceding five chapters to see what lessons can be learnt about the development and construction of writing and teaching identities, and the ways in which they interrelate in the lives and teaching of these five individuals.

The participants

The five people studied in the final stage of this research were selected on the basis of a four way typology. Philippa was chosen as a result of a search for a *teacher writing enthusiast*, someone whose prime identity was as a teacher but who wrote significantly in her spare time. Paul was expected to be a *writer who has become a teacher*, Andy both a *writer who works in schools alongside teachers* and a *teacher who has become a writer* and Elizabeth a *teacher who has become a writer*. Claire represents a special type of *teacher who has become a writer*, since in her case the transition was not self-motivated but the result of a national policy initiative; in the event, this distinction sets her apart from the others in a number of ways, as will become clear. The purpose of the typology was to ensure that a range of writer-teachers was interviewed and in that aim it was successful. However, through the interviews, the categories were revealed to be simplistic and ill fitting to the individuals concerned. It soon became apparent that there were many common features shared in various combinations by members of what had been envisaged as distinct categories. This is not to say that the five participants are all very similar; far from it, but their differences do not cast them into the original categories. Three of the five, Andy, Paul and Philippa, have no hesitation in describing themselves as writers, while a fourth,

Elizabeth, has rather reluctantly accepted the title after years of professional writing. Claire sees herself as a writer only in the context of her teaching.

Writers and their texts

Of the five participants, three are widely published in print. Andy has published a wide range of books for children including poetry anthologies, narrative poems, folk tales and other stories, alphabet books picture books and instructional 'reading books'. Elizabeth has written several books and other teaching materials for professional audiences. Paul's print output consists mostly of his journalism for local newspapers.

Online publication has presented valued opportunities. For Andy it enabled him to share his adult poetry with the world after years of writing it purely for the sake of its creation, and it has served a similar function for Philippa's stories. Paul's contribution to online journalism, as both writer and editor, has given him the freedom to express his own views in a way not possible in his print work. Philippa and Paul have blogs related to their teaching and Andy has two, one dedicated to his children's writing and one to his poems for adults.

On top of these published works, at least three of these writers have a substantial body of unpublished drafts. Paul has many notebooks containing drafts, mostly first drafts, of what he calls his 'creative writing' and Philippa has a large number of works, many of which have been crafted to a finished or near-finished standard. Elizabeth has texts she has written for her writers' group and Andy has drafts in progress, some of which will not achieve publication; he talks on his blog of 'a large backlog of work'. Claire is alone in having no aspiration to write either for the sake of writing or for publication of any kind.

All of the participants talk of writing for professional purposes, for example school reports, policy documents and funding bids.

Early writer identities

One quality shared by Andy, Paul, Philippa and Elizabeth is that their writing identity was taken on very early in life. Paul says that being a 'proper' writer is a 'lifelong ambition' but also that he knew he was a writer from the time of his bath time epiphany at the age of six or seven. Both Paul and Philippa wrote prolifically at school and at home and while Andy seems initially to have forged his creative identity as an oral storyteller, he soon came to see himself as a writer and poet. Elizabeth's account of her childhood family activities shows her very much at home with purposeful creative writing activities, but in later childhood she somewhat lost confidence in her abilities as a writer. Rather than always being strong, Elizabeth's writer identity has developed steadily through her life; she does, however, seem to have been comfortable to see herself in some way as a writer from childhood. This sense appears to have diminished in her teenage years (and beyond) thanks to her perceived lack of wider academic success.

As a child, Claire seems to have seen herself as a writer only in the sense that everyone who can write is a writer and like Elizabeth may have had her writer identity undermined by the way she felt judged by school. This makes an interesting contrast with the ways in which the work of Andy, Paul and Philippa was praised and often enjoyed, variously by parents, teachers and their peers, though it is also worth noting that Paul was able to rise above attacks on his writer identity by secondary school peers.

All but Claire talk about quite extensive writing and significant writing achievements (such as Andy's 'historical novels') outside the confines of the school curriculum.

Factors encouraging a writer identity

Reading

Childhood reading features in all the accounts, prominently in most of them. Paul, Elizabeth and Philippa grew up in homes where reading and writing were actively modelled and encouraged, with Elizabeth's father going so far as to organise his children in the production of a family magazine. The enjoyment of books and stories played a significant role in the homes of these three and seem to be linked with memories of warm, supportive parents. This contrasts starkly with Andy's book-free and difficult home environment in which he 'thinks', but cannot really recall that his mother read to him. He describes his prep school as 'quite punitive' and himself at the time as 'very unhappy', but in this unpromising environment he found warmth and affection in lessons given by his 'kind' and 'generous' English teachers from whom he quickly learnt a love of reading and of literature. He attributes the positive feelings he has about the act of sitting down to write to this stage of his personal history. Both Paul and Philippa identify a style of public library use which borders on the eccentric, but serves to illustrate how their memories (and the memories of the other participants) of reading are associated with particular literacy practices.

Overall affective factors seem to have played a large role in the way these four became literate: they all give the impression that their early experiences of written and oral stories were linked with warmth and fun. Claire's account of her early experience with books is much more limited. She talks of reading 'with family' and in particular of nightly bedtime

stories with her mother, though the latter appear to have had the acquisition of reading skills as their focus, and Claire herself identifies this reading and 'constantly being corrected' as the two pillars of the literacy support she received from her parents. It may be that Claire's early reading was also associated with warmth and fun, but these are not features she chose to talk about.

Freedom to compose

Paul and Philippa speak of a considerable degree of agency in their childhood writing. Paul speaks favourably of the 'permissive atmosphere' of his primary school in which he wrote happily because that was his main interest and he was 'free to make [his] own decisions and take [his] own path'. The freedom he had to write, to the extent that he could spend much more of each day on writing than his peers (who presumably had other specialisms, or may have been expected to stick to a broader curriculum) was no doubt exceptional, and the freedom of which Philippa speaks appears to be freedom within the constraints of a conventional writing task. She describes her school experience disparagingly as 'being left to get on with it', but conveys a sense of great pleasure when she talks about her copious writing at home, which was supported by her parents through encouragement and the provision of materials and a space in which to write. At a similar age, Andy was beginning to compose his own historical novels and also developing his storytelling powers by composing tales to be told to his peers. Although the telling was outside of the classroom, it was done in the institutional setting of his boarding school. For most of the participants, although primary school writing may have been a matter of routine assignments and exercises, most also found other outlets for their creative writing. Elizabeth's father seems to have established a semi-formal creative learning environment, while Paul, Philippa and Andy took to writing and telling stories on their own initiative.

The extent to which each was aided and encouraged by parents and others would have been an interesting theme to pursue in further interviews. Were Philippa and Paul's parents as 'hands off' as these two participants claim, or is it a matter of the two writer-teachers trying to position themselves as inherently gifted and without need of external support?

Supportive adults, role models and mentors

All participants do, however, consider that they developed their early literate identity within a supportive, though usually non-interventionist environment and with the exception of Andy this included their home environment. For Claire, as already noted, the core features were explicit support for learning to read and frequent correction, both of her reading and of her spoken language. Philippa and Paul had the active support of local librarians and, together with Elizabeth were at least encouraged to read and write by their parents. In addition, Paul's primary teachers and school environment played a positive role. Andy was able to draw similar support and encouragement from appreciative peers and his English teachers, though there is no evidence the latter group were aware of his extra-curricular writing.

In their formative years, all but Claire have benefitted from the intervention of at least one influential figure. These figures include particular teachers at school. Paul, who tends to underplay the possible contribution of others to his writer identity, nonetheless singles out one of his secondary teachers as 'inspirational' and Andy and Philippa both speak warmly of a number of English teachers. Mostly these are not chosen because of their visible skills as writers themselves, or because of ways of teaching, but rather because of their ability to enthuse and motivate or simply be an attractive figure to emulate. Part of this must involve

their ability to visibly “conduct their own lives in literate ways” (Kaufman, 2002, p.56). Philippa appears to be the only participant to engage with a charismatic teacher figure as a fellow storyteller or writer and this she did in both primary school, with the storytelling Mrs Dyson and in secondary school with the unnamed ‘writer in residence’; even in these cases it appears that the most influential thing about the people concerned was the example they presented of a creative storyteller. Elizabeth’s inspirational teacher is the redoubtable Miss Steele, to whom the origins of her belief in the importance of clarity and simplicity can probably be attributed. As with Andy’s university tutor a large part of her power to influence seems to derive from her sheer authority in matters of literacy and literature. For Claire, the figure who changed her writing life appears to be Pie Corbett, whom she encountered later in life, as leader of a course of professional development. Corbett differs from the other influential figures noted here in two important ways. First, Claire’s contact with him was very limited; it seems unlikely that Claire would count him as someone she knows personally. Secondly, his express intention in those encounters was for the teachers and teaching assistants present to adopt his highly codified method of teaching writing.

Audience

Most of the participants attribute surprisingly little importance to audience in their current writing. Audience does, however, appear to have played a significant formative role. Andy was encouraged to develop his storytelling skills by the enthusiastic response of his listening audience, while Paul’s teachers gave him frequent opportunities to write for a school audience, for example by commissioning elements of school performances and reading his work aloud to the class. Philippa’s parents provided an important, appreciative audience as did Elizabeth’s and Paul’s family.

Paul describes the pursuit of writing as 'solipsistic', and the kind of inner drive that this entails is visible in the accounts of Andy and Philippa too. If they have this drive, that may mean that audience is not something that they need to sustain their writing (all three have produced copious unseen work) but all at some point admit taking some pleasure (or at least motivation) from the fact that their writing is appreciated by others. Moreover, as will be argued below, a keen perception of audience has a role in giving writing authenticity for Elizabeth and Paul. It may be, as with the question of family support, that Paul, Philippa and Andy are positioning themselves as inherently writers, whose gifts are purely their own.

Writing as a gift

For all of the participants, literacy seems to have 'come naturally', much as spoken language had. None admit to any significant difficulties in the early stages of learning to write, something which might explain the fact that they had no particular memories of acquiring the skills of literacy.

The three participants who manifest the strongest self-motivated drive to write, Andy, Paul and Philippa all give the impression at some point in their interviews that they see their ability to write as a special gift or endowment. Philippa describes herself as 'a natural writer' since childhood and like Paul she gives the impression that she is always able, indeed is personally driven, to write fluently and copiously on a regular basis. Paul implies that he feels that he is full of complete stories waiting to be released to the world:

'sometimes I'll go [snaps fingers] there you go, that's a story but it generally comes fully formed'.

Paul

Andy talks of some of his poems occurring to him as 'gifts', which he needs only to write down, no further crafting being required. Both Andy and Paul compare themselves to Coleridge in their ability to compose even in their sleep:

'on one occasion I had a very strong sort of Coleridgean experience of having this wonderful poem about a highwayman and the next morning, of course, I couldn't remember a phrase from it'

Andy

'...when Coleridge talked about 'I dreamt a poem', I may have dreamt a poem, it wasn't a very good poem but I dreamt one anyway.'

Paul

It is only fair to acknowledge that neither claims the result was a good poem (or, in Andy's case a poem at all) and Paul is at pains to stress that he is not claiming to be 'like Coleridge'. However, both do seem to imply a facility with words which not many, otherwise literate, people would claim Paul goes further than this when he says that some poems simply happen and he does not feel able to take responsibility for them; he feels a fraud. This implies a very special gift.

Andy's reflection that as a child he, 'found [he] could write poems and stories that were actually quite entertaining', also suggests the idea of a personal gift.

The disposition of these three to write copiously and frequently for no other purpose than the writing itself sets all three of them apart from Claire who almost exclusively writes for professional reasons and whose writer identity seems to arise predominantly from her

commitment to the teaching of writing. Until her relatively recent return to creative writing it would also have differentiated them from Elizabeth.

Sometimes this perspective, that writers are in some way exceptional or different is invoked by reference to others. Elizabeth cites a friend who says,

'I may not get this novel published but I can't help it I've got to write it'

Elizabeth

while Paul talks of various peers who he feels are more successful as writers because they are more willing to let their writer identity predominate and separate themselves from friends and family for the sake of their art.

As well as being the most confident in claiming writer status, Andy, Paul and Philippa all hold English literature degrees, something which they all feel gives them some advantage over their teaching colleagues. All talk of having knowledge and skills about writing and language which their peers do not and Andy goes as far as to say that bringing this knowledge to his classes was 'almost [a] secret special assignment'. The exact nature of this specialist expertise is a matter for speculation (something which might have been explored in subsequent interviews). How far is their perceived expert status a matter of especially relevant skills and knowledge and how far a matter of the self-belief arising specifically from the holding of the qualification? And in Andy's case, because he began his teaching career in an era when most primary teachers had not been to university, let alone Cambridge, it was an exceptionally prestigious qualification, which, he implied, set him apart from his colleagues. Certainly the 'specialist' elements in the practice they recount seem more likely to come out of their personal experience as writers rather than their academic knowledge.

An example that springs to mind is Philippa's 'one of those '-ing' verb sentences' –hardly a specialist term. There can be no doubt that holding an English literature degree makes a difference to these participants' identities, a difference which they are able to relate to both their writing and their teaching and which is manifest in their frequent citing of literary authorities and a readily stated, albeit questionable, belief that their specialist knowledge is of great value to their teaching.

Elizabeth presents herself as both similar and different to this group. Like them, she is now confident to express a writer identity, but says this has only been the case for the past fifteen years or so. She has come to see herself as a writer thanks to her experience of writing for a succession of external purposes. She enjoys writing and 'getting it right' but the great majority of her writing, and all her professional writing has been the presentation of the ideas to be found in the academic works of others, rather than of the spontaneously arising ideas of creative writers. She says that this kind of writing to commission 'doesn't feel like writing' in the way that writing fiction does.

'Somehow, you're a writer if you write fiction and you're not such a writer if you write non-fiction.'

Elizabeth

The way Elizabeth considers this point suggests that she does not completely accept it herself, but it certainly has some bearing on how she feels about herself as a writer. Perhaps behind the sentiment is an assessment that only writers of fiction take responsibility for every stage of the writing of a piece. Writers of non-fiction start work on a body of knowledge which already has some existence. Elizabeth spends some time discussing the difference between routine writing (form filling, report writing) and writing which has a creative element. Although none of them use these terms, Andy, Paul and Philippa seem to

think of their writing as art, certainly in the sense of something individually crafted and of intrinsic worth, while Elizabeth seems to see herself as something of a journeyman.

For her part, Claire makes no claims to be an artist or to have learnt a craft. She seeks support when writing formally to parents (so, given her relative youth, might be seen as an apprentice to the craft) while her post-school experience of creative writing seems to amount to two days of a course designed to give her the experience of writing as a primary school pupil. This allows her to present herself to her classes '*as though* I am a writer' (my emphasis) and although she maintains that she really is a writer, she says this is because of her ability to teach writing, rather than any personal proficiency.

Motivation to write

Although she does, through her creative writing, engage in writing for writing's sake, the overwhelming bulk of Elizabeth's writing (and all her professional writing) is for the sake of communicating particular information; it is, arguably, a form of teaching by other means. The desire to inform might be her motivation, or it might be simply that writing is how she makes her living. Similarly, Claire only writes almost exclusively for school-related audiences, such as parents. As discussed above, Paul, Philippa and Andy all profess that writing has intrinsic motivational powers for them.

Writers as teachers

Conception of the role of teacher

Because their careers extend over a long period, it is important to take into account the historical and educational context when considering their teaching and its underpinning philosophy. Elizabeth's and most of Andy's mainstream teaching took place before the National Curriculum (DfE, 1988) and the later Strategies (DfE, 2014) were established and the influence of the Plowden report, with its emphasis on creativity and child-centredness was still felt strongly in their schools (Alexander, 2007). In the same way, their initial teacher training will not have been influenced by a centralised curriculum, as none existed at the time. The remaining three teachers have each been required (by school policy, though not, as explained in Chapter 1, directly by central government) to implement successive versions of the National Strategies in line with their associated assessment mechanisms and so have been far less free to establish their own approaches to teaching; each has effected the accommodation of these strictures in a different way.

Claire and Philippa both have confidence in nationally-sanctioned, genre-based teaching approaches and so do their best to implement the required curriculum. Their approach to teaching writing therefore follows the structure laid down as 'shared writing' (DfE, 2014).

Claire, in particular describes her practice in terms of routines and embedded practices and my observation of one of her lessons confirms that the children she teaches understand and respond enthusiastically to these. It is very clear throughout her interview that Claire has her own set of routines and principles, taken from the works of Pie Corbett. Like Philippa's, Claire's approach to both teaching and texts is highly analytical (she talks of the class

‘dissecting the text’). Having established the minimal elements -words and phrases- of a particular genre, children learn how to build them up into larger units until they are working at the level of their own whole text. Both teachers talk in terms of incremental learning through grammatical understanding, but there is a contrast in how they talk about the process. Much of Claire’s explanation is quite learner-centred and although she does not use the term, she apparently sees incremental learning as a scaffolded approach. She emphasises the need to ensure that children understand every step of the process in order to facilitate the next step. Precise and targeted written and oral feedback is an essential part of teaching and learning and this links back to clearly articulated ‘steps to success’:

‘you need constructive criticism but you need to tell the children how they can improve’
Claire

Affective factors are to the fore in her understanding as she stresses the need to motivate learners with interesting tasks, while an important goal of her teaching is to give children the confidence to try new things.

Despite the fact that her teaching is driven by the need for children to be able to show mastery of specified text features, she says that it is more important for her that children express their own feelings and opinions than comply with a lesson’s textual template. As noted in Chapter 8, it would be interesting to study her written and oral feedback to see how far, in reality, she is able to protect this professed principle against the demands of the curriculum and its assessment framework.

These concerns do not prevent Claire from spending a good proportion of her teaching time directing and leading whole-class activities from the front of the classroom, and like Philippa

she appears to see teacher leadership and direction as a core component of teaching. This is not to say that children's texts are all but dictated. The purpose of whole -class sessions is in part 'getting out the ideas' (Claire), but the process of constantly going back [...] over each sentence saying.. how can I improve this?' (Claire) obviously presents opportunities to the teacher to privilege certain improvements in keeping with the list of desirable language features specified in advance. Philippa uses these specifications to shape the ideas before they are offered.

'Then I'll say right, so now here I think I'm gonna have one of those '-ing' verb sentences, so what should I have, what can I have as an ing verb and you take some ideas and then they'll say and you'll say well I think that one sounds good so you put it down.'

Philippa

Even though she sees this as 'us[ing] all the children's ideas', and 'work[ing] together' the emphasis does seem to be on 'improvement' according to a pre-determined template. And, as discussed in Chapter 7, the degree of learner agency in this process is questionable.

Andy also talks of teaching predominantly in terms of directing whole-class writing activities, in this case conceptualised as a joint creative endeavour, with the teacher as the experienced creative artist. While there is nothing in what he says to suggest any preconceived outcome for the writing, his judgment that teaching would 'soak up all of [his] creative energies' and that 'an awful lot of the personal' was invested in his teaching implies a vigorous contribution to the composition, which may be just as dominant in the creative partnership, albeit more spontaneous. He also compares his teaching role, at least in the early days of his career, to that of 'an actor or a performer'.

In contrast, both Paul and Elizabeth spend more of their interview talking about engaging with children as individual writers. In Elizabeth's case the, at least perceived, prevailing child-centred orthodoxies (Woodhead, 2003; Richards, 1980) of the period when she was teaching will have been a factor in this, as will the fact that she was teaching very young children and then children with SEN. Paul, who at the time of interview was operating under the same curricular constraints as Claire and Philippa presents a somewhat different approach to shared writing, as will be discussed below.

Bringing a writer identity into the classroom

Among the arguments advanced in favour of teachers having at least some experience as writers are that teachers who are writers provide a role model which learners will wish to emulate, that their understanding of the 'agony' and 'ecstasy' of writing (Augsburger, 1998) give them a capacity to empathise with young writers, that their knowledge and skills enable them to explain clearly and teach effectively the many elements of their craft, and that they are able authentically to demonstrate the process of writing.

Providing a role model

Claire's pupils have ample and regular opportunities to see her as an enthusiastic teacher of writing, but she makes no special claim to be seen as a writer. Elizabeth says nothing which indicates that the children she taught saw her as a writer, which is hardly surprising since it is not an identity which at the time she would have claimed for herself. She did, however, share her own drafts with the adults she later taught, though since these would have been of reports and other work-related writing the identity thus enacted is probably closer to administrator than writer. In contrast, Andy, Philippa and Paul all explain how they make

their writer identity clearly visible to their classes and all say that they have explicitly told them that writing is something they choose to do in their free time.

Philippa frequently shares her enthusiasm for writing with children and uses texts she has written herself in her lessons. She also displays motivational charts and records she uses to keep her writing on track where children can see them. Andy too created his own short texts, as models for children to follow, showing them how he drafted them in notebooks before reading extracts aloud or copying them onto the board. The way in which he would contribute creatively in terms of both content and form to shared writing are likely to have left an impression in children's minds of an authentic creative writer at work. Paul, whose pupils are familiar with at least his blog writing, is the only participant to talk about writing his own text at the same time as his class is working independently, and he does this deliberately so that children can see him in the act of writing and also, subsequently, 'see the page that I do'. The way in which this intention is reflected in his approach to shared writing is explored below.

Paul, Andy and Philippa come closest to the ideal of letting children see that they 'conduct their own lives in literate ways', but they do so with a degree of artifice, since they deliberately show children evidence of their out-of-school life. It should be added that all three give the impression that the children they teach also have a general apprehension of them as writers, and no doubt as enthusiastic readers too.

Empathising with young writers

All five participants express their feelings of empathy for the young writers they work with. Philippa and Claire have both undertaken CPD activities which deliberately cast them in the role of classroom writers in order to enhance their understanding of children's experiences as writers in school. Empathy underpins Claire's approach to teaching, thanks to a number of negative personal school experiences of a kind from which she would prefer to protect her pupils and she is especially critical of one of her teachers because, 'I don't think she understood why I was struggling'. Elizabeth expresses understanding of children who feel their writing is not good enough:

'I think I related to that because I never felt that my writing was ever very good'

Elizabeth

and of those who are demotivated by being required to write too much or to work on assignments that are just not interesting. In similar vein, Andy sees routine redrafting as demotivating (so a teaching technique he eschewed). All talk in general terms of encouraging children and celebrating their successes, though Paul also implies a *lack* of empathy for children who do not feel ownership of their work and 'just want to write it and give it in'. These examples all relate to the experience of schooling, or school writing rather than the joys and frustrations of writing undertaken freely and independently. And of the five, it is the two who relate difficult school experiences with writing, and who, in their school days did not profess a writing identity who appear to be the most empathetic. This raises the possibility that *not* being a writer may make a positive contribution to a person's ability to teach writing.

Elizabeth's apprehension of the vulnerability which comes with writing, 'putting yourself on the line', does seem to relate to her lifelong experience as a writer rather than simply her school experience and it bolsters her teaching of adults who were 'terrified of putting anything down on paper because they felt they would make [...] dreadful mistakes', but examples of empathy stemming from circumstances outside of schooling are thin on the ground. Indeed, it appears that empathy is most likely to arise not out of a teacher's positive writer identity but from situations in which the teacher did not feel s/he was a writer.

Knowledge and skills

All of the participants make use of some form of specialist writing knowledge in their teaching. In Claire's case this knowledge underlies a particular writing pedagogy, while Elizabeth drew on her experience as a work-situated writer to teach work-related writing. Andy, Philippa and Paul are able to draw on not only their experience and proficiency as writers, but, by their accounts, on their formal and informal study of English literature, something by which each sets great store. All have English literature degrees and while much of Paul's account of his university experience positions himself against the authority of the university, Andy's position is one almost of reverence, and having been entrusted with this special knowledge he felt a mission to bring it to the children he taught:

'I had a kind of almost secret special assignment to bring this stuff in through the side door'

Andy

Possession of this knowledge, in his view, sets him apart from other teachers. Philippa expresses this advantage in more general terms,

'I'm, like, an English literature graduate so I've got like all this extra stuff that I sort of know about',

Philippa

but in both Andy's and Philippa's account it is difficult to find detail of exactly how they put this knowledge to use in the classroom. Where Paul lacks reverence for his *alma mater* he makes up for it with his references to respected authors, but again it is hard to see how lessons learnt from them make themselves felt in the classroom. Indeed, Paul's view is that often these authorities' injunctions regarding good writing contradict the requirements of the curriculum he is required to teach. For her part, Claire has studied English language both at sixth form and university levels, but seems to have taken little from the experience apart from an aversion to formal language study; in her interview she makes no connection between her studies and the grammatical knowledge which is at the centre of the way she now teaches writing.

Both Paul and Andy consider the idea that their specialist expertise might even get in the way of their capacity to teach writing. Paul explicitly says that the fact that writing comes easily to him 'makes teaching writing quite difficult', especially in respect of children experiencing difficulties:

'I find it more difficult with the children who really struggle because, you know because they're not motivated, because they have a specific difficulty, I can't relate to it directly I've got to really think consciously, "OK what's going on here and why might they not want to write?"'

Paul

While there is nothing in the remainder of the interview to suggest that Paul does not find ways of meeting the needs of these struggling writers, there is also little specific evidence that he does.

Andy, in contrast, found himself 'intuitively drawn' to working with children with SEN even though he considers the idea of somebody as literary and literate as himself working with children who found it difficult to read even the simplest of texts a 'strange irony'. His

response was to find effective theoretical and practical approaches through his own reading, enabling him to support learning through an understanding of 'the very nuts and bolts'. He compares himself to a dancer teaching the disabled to walk.

Andy, Paul and Philippa each provide examples of how their own writing behaviour and experience influence the writing experience of the children they teach. Philippa shares her motivational strategies with her classes as well as writers' club members while Paul takes trouble to make his composing processes visible and also uses his experience of on-line publishing and editing to help his young writers find audiences. Andy's classes experience, through participation, his strategies for creating a text.

Demonstrating writing

The ability to demonstrate how they write has been identified as a potential strength of teachers who are writers (Brooks, 2007). With the exception of Elizabeth, all the participants explain in some detail the way in which they lead or led lessons in which they compose a text in front of their class, usually with children's active participation. With the exception of Paul, all of these talk of a pre-writing stage involving an initial gathering of 'ideas', followed by a writing stage in which phrases and sentences suggested by class members are scribed on a whiteboard or blackboard. None gives a full account of the process by which some contributions are accepted and others rejected, but unless a class is particularly unresponsive a significant degree of filtering is inevitable. Claire probably gives the most information on this part of the process, indicating both that a suggestion from one pupil may be challenged by another pupil and that the final responsibility for selecting and developing these words lies with the teacher.

'Somebody might give an idea and others say, "that's not very effective", but for that child it is effective and what I think a teacher's role is important to do is build upon an idea so you take a child's idea and say "yep great, how about let's develop this?"'

She goes on to imply that this teacher-led development may render the original idea unrecognisable. Rewriting appears to be undertaken as each sentence emerges. Andy, for example, talks of writing a sentence or two as it is spoken before appraising it

'...and then reflect and say "the thing is that's a bit jerky and I wonder if I could make that smoother" and then rub it out and then rewrite it or write it again underneath'

Andy

In describing these lessons, Andy lays great emphasis on crafting, comparing the work in hand with clay modelling.

For Andy, Philippa and Claire the focus is firmly on the text, as it develops. Unlike Philippa and Claire, who were employed as teachers at the time of interview and who are therefore strongly influenced by the prescribed template for shared writing, Andy's approach is one he developed for himself and seems to involve elements of his preferred pedagogy as well as elements of the way he writes himself. At the heart of the process is the creation of a new text, apparently without any preconception as to the detail of its form, and Andy's frequent references to the ways in which he channelled his creativity into his teaching implies a genuine and spontaneous creativity in action, in a kind of partnership with the children in the class.

Philippa and Claire are concerned to produce a specific type of text with specific structural, lexical and grammatical features and for this reason the pre-writing stage is lengthy and elaborate. They talk of preliminary lessons spent on analysing model texts and identifying

features which children know they will be called on to reproduce. Claire talks of language games which often serve to generate targeted structures and vocabulary, of class activities (such as the poster-based activity I observed) to a similar end and of the routine activity of 'magpie-ing': collecting desirable words and phrases over a period of time. At the writing phase, although there is a meaningful theme, the text is very much a vehicle for target language. According to her brief outline of a lesson, Philippa describes starting it by writing and quickly improving a sentence suggested by one of the class, and then:

'I'll say right, so now here I think I'm gonna have one of those '-ing' verb sentences'

Philippa

and the next part of the lesson is an extension of the earlier lesson in which this sentence pattern was rehearsed.

Paul, who elsewhere expresses doubt as to the value of focusing on pre-determined elements of language sees this kind of lesson as a way of 'model(ing) the behaviour of a writer', 'externalising the writing process', a process which is as much about the author's critical reflection on the words written as on the words themselves. This may include abandoning sentences or even everything written so far and starting afresh, or making radical revisions:

'I'm going to use that idea there because that's the one I ought to start with'

Paul

This perspective is consonant with Paul's practice of writing in class alongside his pupils. Of all the participants, Paul comes closest to deliberately bringing the way he writes for himself into the classroom. The fact that Paul's account makes only tangential reference to target language does not of course mean that that is not an element of such lessons.

If teachers who write are understood to be bringing their specialist skills to this kind of joint writing, then it is fair to ask the question, do they bring their own writing *modus operandi* into the classroom?

In the interviews the topic of pre-writing activity was not raised, but none of the participants mentioned so much as keeping a (pre-writing) notebook, let alone engaging in games or other activities as a precursor to composition. Elizabeth, of course, researches her professional and scholarly writing, but that is for the purpose of gathering information content, not particular words and structures. Philippa and Paul give the impression that they launch themselves with great energy and no hesitation into a first draft. Andy's approach seems more measured, sometimes involving 'internal drafting', but it still involves moving directly to the first draft and sometimes directly to the final draft, with a whole poem arriving occasionally as a 'gift'.

At the writing stage, Paul does his best to demonstrate the authentic detail of his own composition process, while Andy appears to be bringing the expertise that drives his own writing whilst making two compromises: he encourages children to contribute in their own way to the composition and he also interrupts the process to make teacherly points either about the process or about language. Philippa's adherence to the detail of a genre template is unlikely to be reflected in her own writing.

In their own writing, Andy, Philippa and Paul display varying approaches to revision. Only Philippa professes to undertake major rewriting of whole drafts, though this is something Paul feels he should do, and he even intends to attend a residential school in order to impose this discipline on himself. Andy is quite dismissive of major redrafting, but he is a poet and most of his texts will be relatively short. All three, however, do speak of making

local revisions as they write, and this is the kind of revision which is commonest in their classroom-shared writing. All three are also keen to convey the message to children that writing is a plastic medium: what is written can be changed, and changed again. In this respect their own writing and their classroom writing seem to be in harmony.

Multiple identities

All the participants offer evidence that they each habitually enact a number of identities in their personal and professional life, but thanks to the nature of the study most of that evidence is of their teacher and writer identities. For some there was also an element of academic identity underlying their writer, and sometimes their teacher identity.

Teacher identities

None of the participants gave any evidence that their teacher identity stretched back far beyond the point in their life when they entered the profession. Paul seems to have drifted into teaching via some jobs relating to his other (musical) interests and Andy is open that he saw teaching as a way of supporting himself while he got on with the important work of writing. For Elizabeth, teaching was among what she perceived as a limited range of options for educated young women. Even Claire says she opted to train as a teacher because she 'didn't know what else to do'. Despite this history, there is evidence for a strongly held teacher identity, from all five. This comes in the form of expressions of enthusiasm for and engagement with the practice of teaching, attitudes to the curriculum and relationships with and expressed or implied opinions of teaching colleagues.

Andy and Elizabeth presented themselves as past teachers, though both as teachers fully committed to that identity when they were teaching. For Elizabeth this is most often expressed in terms of concern for the learning and affective needs of the children she taught. She does, however, describe her practice as 'not teachery', implying at least a degree of personal separation from the profession. Her subsequent career as a writer about educational matters she sees as still a kind of teaching, as it involves explaining aspects of educational practice to practitioners whom she expects to apply that knowledge in their own settings. Andy talked both of his place in his classroom community and of an intellectual commitment to understanding processes of literacy and learning underpinning his practice, almost as if he needed to validate his teacher identity through his academic identity. He also implies a superiority over other teachers in his knowledge of and about poetry, whilst acknowledging that other teachers have special strengths in other areas, such as science or the visual arts.

Philippa and Claire both present themselves as strongly committed teachers, enthusiastic about their work and the effect they have on the children they teach. They agree that the nationally prescribed style of teaching and curriculum content offer children the best route to proficiency in writing and both have led CPD events on writing pedagogy for teachers from other schools. They are also particularly collegiate in their understanding of their teaching role, each talking positively about planning work with peers and taking professional advice and guidance from peers and subject leaders. Like Andy and Paul, Philippa sees herself as having special literary and linguistic knowledge not shared by other teachers, but (unlike Andy) she does not give the impression that she feels this makes her in any way superior to them; she speaks of her colleagues only with respect. In addition, Claire has a close professional relationship with her regular teaching assistant and was pleased to attend training with her.

In contrast, the other serving teacher, Paul seems somewhat ambivalent about his teacher identity. On the one hand he relates many instances of working easily and enthusiastically with the classes and individual children he teaches and goes well beyond usual expectations of teachers in order to provide children with encouragement and opportunities for writing. His reflective answers show that he has put a great deal of thought into developing his teaching. On the other hand, some things he says indicate a degree of alienation from teaching and teachers. He describes his first teaching jobs as 'bizarre', for example and distinguishes some of his opinions from those of 'the teachers'. His most noteworthy difference is with a curriculum he sees as requiring children to produce inauthentic writing and although he has no choice but to comply with it he considers teaching in this way a matter of 'playing the game'. Moreover, he considers that playing this game amounts to 'teaching as a teacher'; when he teaches in a way he feels is more in keeping with what writers do then he is 'teaching as a writer'. His preferred mode of teaching then is different from what conventional teachers do. That his subject leadership style may appear to be somewhat high-handed is further evidence that he feels himself to be different from most teachers, in this case because he is more expert.

Andy, too, reveals a certain degree of alienation from other teachers, for example apparently seeing himself as better educated (at least in terms of literature). And while he describes the children he taught as 'fantastic', so far as teachers go he is happy only to observe that 'some' are 'quite nice'.

Writer identities

The writing, story-telling and literary identities of Andy, Paul and Philippa reach back into their early childhood. All three talk of extensive reading, sometimes bordering on the excessive, and lengthy written compositions undertaken before the age of ten; all three report a confidently held sense of themselves as writers or storytellers. Elizabeth also reports enjoying writing as a young child, but for her the motivation comes from her family rather than herself. Like most of the others, Claire has no memories of learning the mechanics of writing and since she did no writing for her own purposes has little memory of her early writing. All but Claire report support and encouragement from parents and at least some teachers (and even Claire implies encouragement from her primary teachers) which may have served to reinforce the sense of a writer identity. Andy, Paul and Philippa have retained a strong sense of themselves as writers throughout their adult lives, with an almost irrepressible drive to write for writing's sake supported by personal routines and in the case of the men, a 'fetishistic' (Andy's word) attachment to certain writing equipment. Elizabeth's sense of herself as a writer has grown gradually through her life.

Although their professed attitude to audience is varied, each enjoys a degree of validation from others and it can be inferred (at least) that all benefit from support and understanding from close family to accommodate at least the time spent on writing. In addition, Elizabeth and Philippa gain endorsement from their writers' groups. The children in Andy's, Philippa's and Paul's class also, according to their accounts, recognise their respective teacher's writer status.

So far I have considered 'writer' as a single identity for each participant, but it makes equal sense to consider each as having a number of writer identities at their disposal. Paul explicitly makes a distinction between 'authentic' writing, through which the author's voice is articulated, and other, presumably 'inauthentic', writing, which is done at the behest of others, often to a formula and with little enthusiasm. Paul's linking of authenticity and voice suggests a definition of the former as 'truth to oneself' which positions it firmly as a matter of identity. Among Paul's inauthentic writer identities are 'secondary school writer' and 'local journalist'; his 'authentic writer' identities include 'fiction writer', 'songwriter', 'poet', 'writer for school performances' and 'blog writer/editor'. It can be inferred that his undergraduate academic writing was authentic when it was poorly rated by his tutors thanks to Paul's attempts to write in original or innovative ways, and inauthentic when it achieved high marks because he was 'playing the [academic] game'. Although it involves writing to a closely specified template for a purpose which is far from literary, the pride and enthusiasm with which Paul talks about his bid writing pushes it into the authentic category. He clearly sees this task as a creative enterprise designed to beguile the potential donor and though it may be that a personal author's voice is muted, each bid is crafted to appeal to the personal interests of the reader. To Paul it is authentic personal communication with a satisfying purpose. As an activity, bid writing might be considered part of the wider teacher professional writing (planning, policy documents, reports to parents, letters and so on) undertaken by all the teachers in this study. Philippa can claim many of the authentic writer identities listed for Paul but would probably claim few, if any of the inauthentic ones.

Superficially, Elizabeth's professional and academic writing bears some similarity to Paul's journalism; it is on subjects not of her choosing, written to order and for payment. However, the differences are not profound enough to deny her a strongly-held, authentic writing

identity. Elizabeth has a keen personal and professional interest in the subject of her writing and takes a pride in her skill in expressing complex ideas in a way which is accessible and relevant to the educational practitioners for whom she writes. Unlike Paul's conception of a personal voice, Elizabeth's does not entail a projection of herself into the text, but rather her great skill of writing, and therefore communicating, clearly. As with Paul's bid writing, the personal element is more in the way the text is tailored to the particular audience than in the author's voice. Elizabeth has had an interest in writing both fiction and poetry for a number of years and currently, perhaps boosted by her late-developing acceptance of her professional writing identity, is consolidating a 'creative writer' identity, in part through membership of a writers' group.

Philippa, Paul and Andy see their writing in a cultural context, each citing a number of authors whose work and whose opinions on writing have influenced their own. Andy's advice to young aspiring writers is,

'... first find your writer heroes, the ones you love to read, the ones that make you almost feel "I'd like to write that"'

Andy

Although Andy is the only participant to suggest that his own writing also contributes to the culture on which it draws -he is, after all, the only widely published creative writer in the group- it is clear that in part the literary writer identity of these three arises out of their active engagement with a literary culture.

Andy has two literary or creative writer identities, one in connection with his work for adults and one relating to his children's writing. According to Andy, his writing for children is greatly influenced by the full breadth of his reading and there is no doubting the high literary quality

of much of his published work, an opinion not just my own, but supported by many readers, reviewers and prize juries. When he talks about his work, it is apparent that he feels the entire corpus underpins his status as a writer even though some of his work, whilst still being enjoyable and loved by readers, is not particularly complex or original¹.

Other identities

Notwithstanding the disclaimer at the beginning of this chapter, thanks to the framing of the interviews most of the data concerning identity relates to either teaching, writing or both. It goes without saying that all the people concerned have other identities which relate to other aspects of their lives, but these were not explored except where they in some way came into contact with their teaching or writing. Paul, Philippa and Andy all mention their family life. For Paul this is a source of some tension, as he wants to spend time with his wife and young daughter and this will reduce his opportunities for writing. He says that he is determined to prioritise his family. Philippa does not mention her family in her interview, but in her later written comments reveals that the birth of her child was the reason she stopped writing for a time. Andy, on the other hand, used his experience looking after his children as an inspiration for his children's writing; unlike Philippa and Paul he was not teaching full-time and so was probably not experiencing the same kinds of tension.

There are surprisingly few references to gender in any of the interviews. Elizabeth reflects on a number of points in her life when her opportunities were limited because she was female, or when she felt intimidated and silenced by men, while Philippa makes the explicit choice to write a story about a 'woman pilot'. It may be an implicit response to perceived expectations

¹ Many examples could be cited, but unfortunately, to do so would breach Andy's anonymity.

and prejudices that Philippa chose not to refer in the interview to being a mother, while both Paul and Andy both talked about looking after their children. In the case of the point made by Elizabeth, it is possible that it had some bearing on her future as a writer.

There are several oblique references to social class and status. Paul refers to his 'really, really rough' secondary school in which his sophisticated vocabulary made him 'stand out', while Andy mentions his 'lower-middle class, uncultured' family, and the fact that his boarding education was state funded. Both appear to be positioning themselves as from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, Andy perhaps because in many ways he appears to be a typically advantaged Cambridge graduate. Paul, however, states elsewhere that his parents were teachers and is also clear that he felt out of place in his school. There may be an element of positioning themselves as 'self-made' writers in this, given the association between higher social class and 'higher' art forms (Sawyer, 2012). For her part, Claire reports being discouraged (unsuccessfully) from changing her accent from southern to northern when she moved to Yorkshire. Paul and Andy seem to have weathered any possible disadvantage (the former may even have been spurred on by it) and Claire's accent does not appear to have been an issue to her in her adult life.

Dealing with teacher and writer identities

In Chapter 2, identity was characterised as both situated and dynamic and multiple identities considered in terms of the metaphors of borderlands (Alsup 2006), sedimentation (Rowse and Pahl, 2007; Holland and Leander, 2004) and lamination (Bendix and Brenneis, 2005; Holland and Leander, 2004). Intrapersonal continuity and consistency, understood as a core

identity was also seen as integral to identity (Mishler, 2004; Adawu and Martin-Beltrán, 2012; Gee, 2000).

Significant elements of what participants report point towards a relatively stable incorporation of identities, as illustrated by the ideas of sedimentation and lamination, with a number of their accounts revealing evidence of inner consistency across teaching and writing. Elizabeth has shown a concern both for those she teaches, whether present or distant, and to explain things clearly to them. Andy has always been motivated by the desire to create new and well-written texts, both in his writing for children and adults and in his collaborative writing with classes and Claire's acquisition of expertise in respect of writing is an extension of her pedagogical expertise.

Most of the participants seem to favour either a teacher or a writer identity. For Andy, writing has had an important place throughout his life, while teaching occupied at most a couple of decades. He originally thought teaching would fund his true vocation of writing, but in the event found that it was an alternative, and demanding, channel for his creative talents. He remained a writer throughout his teaching years, but as a full-time writer he refuses to undertake teacher-like activities in schools, where he presents himself as a writer, sharing his work and some information about his writing life with an audience. Paul, similarly, has always kept up his writing activities while teaching but not *vice versa*. Teaching is clearly the more important to Claire and on balance probably to Elizabeth too; most of her written output has been created with a mission to teach and until relatively recently has been at the behest of others, rather than driven by a personal urge to create. Philippa is unique among the group in her ability to talk with apparently equal self-assurance and authority about both her writing and her teaching. All of these experiences can be

characterised in terms both of a core identity but also of a constantly changing and rebalancing set of elements relating to that core.

How well do the metaphors of sedimentation and lamination fit the ways in which each person accommodates these two identities (alongside many others)? Elizabeth's story seems to fit the former model quite well. She talks of the gradual development of her writing as she takes on increasingly demanding assignments, eventually earning her living through writing for publication and then undertaking other kinds of writing for her own pleasure. The subject of her writing relates directly to her experience of teaching and other work in educational contexts, so that 'layers' of teaching lie between 'layers' of writing. Moreover, these layers of personal experience will be visible in her writing. Over the years, writing has provided a greater proportion of the geological 'material', but there are visible bands of teaching, which may (to extend the metaphor) give strength to the resulting rock, as of course may bands of other material, such as personal reading and a wide range of personal experience accreted in the course of a lifetime. To some extent, this model fits Philippa and Paul, who both have produced sedimented texts in their educational blogs and possibly to Andy, who has incorporated his writing practices into his class teaching.

The idea of lamination has much in common with sedimentation, as each sees identity as built up of successive layers. Lamination also takes in the notion that the successive layers and their complementary properties add strength, and the idea that a material thus composed is capable of producing a strong and resonant tone. As a metaphor this sits well with a teacher's strong and complex identity producing a clear tone for learners to hear and follow. The concern for clear communication which Elizabeth attributes to her writing, and Philippa's enthusiasm for writing make the teaching of each all the more powerful.

Neither metaphor, however, sheds much light on the process by which the complex identity is formed and continues to develop, unlike the 'borderlands' metaphor. Operating in 'borderlands' has been characterised as a process of identity development through 'cognitive and emotional dissonance' (Alsup, 2005, p.126). Both resistance to and accommodation of such experience can be revealed by how a person positions him/herself in relation to the event(s) concerned.

Borderlands may be thought of as an area where conflicting knowledge, beliefs and values exist together and must be negotiated by anybody inhabiting them. There is an implication that the individual must leave familiar territory (homeland?) in order to be there and must expect to encounter elements of the borderlands which originate in other homelands. In this process, a core identity engages through interaction in the formation of a complex identity.

Such conflicts may not always result in a change of location. Paul, for example, relates a number of challenges to his writer identity, beginning with exchanges with peers in secondary school and differences with authority figures at school and university; less dramatic (but no less alienating) is his experience as a local journalist. In each case, in Paul's account, these conflicts have left him if anything more determined to be the authentic writer he consciously aspires to be. Similarly, Andy and Philippa have not been deterred from writing when they were unable to find a publisher.

Conversely, an individual may, like St Paul on the road to Damascus¹, make a new homeland in territory which was once foreign. This seems to have been Claire's response to the

¹Acts 9:3–9

training led by Pie Corbett, though it is not clear what, if anything, she felt she was leaving behind as she does not give the impression of a great commitment to her previous practice. It may be that what this highly structured approach replaced was Claire's experience of uninspiring and unsupportive teaching in her own education. Philippa too seems to have been more than ready to embrace both Corbett's practices and a faith in teaching grammatical structures explicitly, explaining that she had (apparently independently) abandoned her earlier belief in children's ability to write effectively without structured support. It may be that this was because of the dissatisfaction she expresses with her own *laissez-faire* education. Alternatively, she may have adopted both Corbett's methods and grammar teaching because she was impressed by them and is now seeing her (contrasting) childhood experiences through the lens of her new-found beliefs. A third possibility is that she has yielded to pressure from the curriculum or school policies and has created a narrative for herself and others in which she is the agent of change. Whatever the circumstances, like Claire, she is secure in her new homeland.

New experiences do not, in fact, need to involve any degree of dissonance: Andy seems to have relocated much of his writerly creativity within creative classroom activities. He attributes this to a school environment (and implicitly a zeitgeist) in which teachers were encouraged by an imaginative headteacher to bring their personal strengths into their teaching. The creative activity of writing resonated (because well laminated) with the creative approach to teaching in his school.

But there are examples in the interviews of more complex ways of living and learning. Elizabeth seems to have experienced education as a borderland from her start at secondary school through to the achievement of her master's degree. She lacked belief in her own abilities, feeling the territory to be owned by those 'cleverer' or more vocal than herself; for

these reasons she worked for many years as a writer before she was able to take satisfaction from her work and consciously accept the designation. The clarity of approach shown by one charismatic teacher (Miss Steele) and the later support and encouragement of academic tutors and commissioning editors were vital in bringing her to greater security.

Much of Andy's life experience can be understood as being in the borderlands. One of his earliest reported experiences is of being removed from a somewhat disturbed 'lower-middle class, uncultured' home and sent to a 'punitive' boarding school in which aspects of his life were 'very unhappy'. Reflecting on his literacy experiences, however, he recalls this as a positive time in his life, with caring English teachers and peers acting as a ready audience for his stories as a counterpoint to an intimidating regime and unsympathetic teachers in other subjects. It may be that at this point in his life, school represented a relatively homogeneous stability and home a kind of borderland. Today, when he appears in schools, Andy deliberately emphasises the border-crossing nature of each encounter by refusing to undertake any teaching activities.

As an English subject leader and schoolteacher, Paul is certainly operating in borderlands. Whilst holding firm to his beliefs about his own writing he must compromise with a curriculum with which he feels himself in conflict and with teachers who, he implies, incline to the officially endorsed view of writing. This he does by making relatively minor concessions (*e.g.* endorsing spelling lists) and at other times by asserting his literary authority (*e.g.* by being an 'apostrophe Nazi'). In the interview he plays down his accommodation of National Curriculum targets, though it is hard to believe that they do not have a significant role to play in the life of his class. By presenting children with the idea that the Curriculum's prescriptions are not the only way to think about writing he is bringing

them into the borderlands too. In describing a recently-taught lesson using a sensory/creative writing approach he is deliberately portraying his practice as located in borderland.

Philippa presents her writer identity in a very similar way to Paul, but deals with the dissonances experienced thanks to the English curriculum quite differently. The concept of borderlands is that of an area (either on each side of a formal border, or a 'no man's land' between borders) in which elements found on either side are brought together, often with resulting tensions. Philippa's organisation of school writing implies the construction of a solid and impermeable border, with curriculum writing on one side and free writing on the other. While this may be a fair characterisation of her practice, children's learning is unlikely to respect such a division; if they are able to show success in terms of National Curriculum assessments, who is to say whether this is due to the focused instruction of curriculum writing or the opportunities to compose freely of the writers' club? On the other hand, by bringing elements of curricular approaches to her own writing (*e.g.* through setting herself targets) she seems to be constructing a new and secure homeland for herself.

However, for writers teaching writing, the classroom is in a sense necessarily borderland territory. Although, as in the case of the situation described by Andy, a writing identity may fit comfortably in a classroom, the teacher's identity, being situated in the action of the classroom is different from the identity enacted when writing quietly at home. Put bluntly, although the writer-teacher may de-emphasise, or even forget or suppress altogether her/his writer identity, s/he remains the teacher. Paul articulates this predicament when he senses children responding to his writerly indecision with, 'he should know, he's the teacher'. Andy, arguably the most established writer of the group insists, 'the children would have perceived me not as a writer but as their teacher'.

Both sedimentation and lamination focus on the creation of a substantial and stable material, albeit one which may continue to be added to. Although sedimentation is an ongoing process, involving the weathering of rocks and their reformation as wholly new ones, the fact that it takes place in geological time does not convey a sense of dynamism in the way that the borderlands model does. Nor do the sedimentation and lamination metaphors give a prominent role to a core identity, something which is apparent in the accounts of all of the participants. One thing that all the interviews shows is that life for the participants is one of continuing change. The borderlands metaphor, whilst not standing in refutation of the other two, does seem better to represent to variety, dynamic, pace and personal stress of the situation in which writer-teachers find themselves.

For some, the tension between writing and teaching has been the motor of development. Andy was able to bring elements of his writer and teacher self together harmoniously in the 1970s and 80s but found that by the early 1990s curriculum constraints meant this was no longer possible. For Claire there appears to be no tension, while through drawing and observing a closed border, Philippa continues to manage the tension. For Paul, who portrayed himself as living dangerously in the borderlands, however, that has proven impossible, and since the end of the academic year in which I interviewed him he has been working not as a teacher but as a consultant supporting literacy and education.

10

Conclusion

This study in context

As noted in Chapter 2, studies of writer-teachers are rare (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009), with a high proportion of writer-teacher studies located in the relatively captive populations of ITE courses (Domaile and Edwards, 2006; Luce-Kapler et al., 2001; Norman and Spencer, 2005) and CPD programmes (Dix and Cawkwell, 2011; Wood and Lieberman, 2000), the most plentiful source of these being the US's National Writing Project (National Writing Project, 2014). As also noted in Chapter 2 the proportion of studies focusing on questions of identity is itself very small (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009; Cremin and Baker, 2010). Of these studies, the one set in England (Cremin and Baker, 2010) focuses on classroom enactments of identity, while the US study (McKinney and Giorgis, 2009) as already noted, has much in common with this study. It works with a small group of teachers (11 in the first phase, 4 in

the second) and investigates life history (through a written autobiography) and current pedagogy and dispositions (through interview). In other ways the two studies are complementary. While McKinney and Giorgis categorise and select their participants from a homogeneous group largely on the grounds of their pedagogy, the present study, through working with a group of writer-teachers, most of whom have a substantive claim to be writers in their own right, has a stronger focus on writer identities and participants have very diverse experience.

The present study enters particular areas previously under-researched. In investigating teachers' whole lives through taking a longer term perspective is able to relate differences of practice to current and historical context and pressures. It is also able to explore in some detail writer identities which are often intense and which for long periods within a given biography may be unrelated to teaching, while also dealing with the teachers' experiences as learners themselves. One advantage of not restricting participation in the study to teachers who are currently serving, and have (as in many cases) given the career commitment implied by membership of a CPD programme, is that it makes it more likely the study will include teachers who find the tensions created by a dual writer-teacher identity onerous or even untenable. A benefit of working with a group of unlinked participants, rather than members of the same ITE or CPD programme is that it reduces the chance of their voicing a shared perception, developed through group membership.

Writer-teachers and identity

At the end of Chapter 1 the two research questions underlining this study were discussed. The aim of the research has been to answer the questions, '*What influences shape the professional identities of writer-teachers?*' and then 'how do teachers who are writers draw on a writer identity in their teaching?' The extent to which it has been possible to address and answer these questions is explored in this section, under three sub-headings taken from the Chapter 1 discussion.

Identity

What factors shaping identity have emerged from this research? Is identity, as argued in Chapter 2, something that continues to change throughout life? Is there evidence concerning the role played by other people and by critical incidents and is it possible to say anything about the relative effects of formal and less formal contexts? And given that this study explores identity through narrative, what evidence is there of a relationship between these two things?

Childhood experiences undoubtedly have a role to play. Of the five participants in the substantive phase, all but Claire talk of childhood experiences which encouraged or confirmed their interest in writing. Both in-school and out-of-school experiences have been significant, with home (and in Andy's case, less formal boarding school experiences) having had a particularly important role to play in early childhood. It is also worth noting that many such formative events and circumstances, including many in school, are related in affective terms of enjoyment and warmth and are facilitated by benign but not over-involved adults: librarians and sometimes teachers, as well as parents. The interviews began with focus on

early experiences, so it is hardly surprising that the data includes plentiful evidence of formative factors in early life; certainly all five participants identified aspects of their early experience which contribute to either their writer or teacher identity, and usually both.

However, there is, equally for all five, evidence of events in later life shaping their identities, and of adult identities being far from fixed. For, example, Elizabeth's gradual adoption of an academic writer identity owes much to her encounters with higher education as an adult, and her continuing success with publication. This series of experiences may have had some role in giving her the courage to return to the creative writing she had enjoyed as a child. Paul's experience of journalism, initially embraced as 'exciting', ended in alienation from formulaic writing and a commitment to writing texts which embody a personal voice. Andy's identity as a children's writer arose out of his reading with his own children some time in his late thirties, though he sees it as an extension of a much longer established writer identity. Philippa's writer identity is similarly long-standing, but it was threatened by the demands of teaching and parenthood and recovered in part with the encouragement of a teaching colleague. For Claire, early adult experiences inspired her teacher identity, while her writer-teacher identity owes much to a critical encounter with a particular school of pedagogy (and its creator) only a year or so before the date of the interview.

Both formal and informal contexts featured in the interviews. A good proportion of the early formative experiences related by the participants took place in the informal context of home and these were almost exclusively positive (the only real exception being Andy's allusions to his 'difficult' family life). Experiences in the formal context of school (as a student) were more mixed, with some tales of discouragement but also of triumph in the face of adversity.

Many personal school incidents were recounted with a high affective content, involving feelings of frustration, disappointment or, less frequently, joy and satisfaction. In the interviews, the writer-teachers seemed to remember little of the detail of how they were taught, but more about particular memorable encounters. All five participants went through a conventional teacher education course but none admits to a significant impact on their teacher identity. Andy dismisses his secondary PGCE as irrelevant to his career in primary schools, while although Claire says that it was on her teacher education course that she fell in love with teaching, the important experience came on her school placements and she says she has no memory of learning anything in formal university sessions. None of the others mentions their teacher education. It may be that this is, at least to some extent a matter of teachers positioning themselves as not needing any support to be the teachers they are, or it may reflect the reality that teaching is best understood and learnt in action.

Most participants mention events which could be described as critical incidents. Memories of their school years, in particular tended to focus on particular memorable encounters rather than on the detail of how participants were taught. Some incidents, such as Andy's triumphant reading on the school bus and Paul's invitation to write for a school performance served to confirm or further identities, while others, such as Elizabeth's experiences of floundering academically in her early days in secondary school or many of Claire's encounters with English teachers served to discourage a certain kind of writer or learner identity. Such negative experiences do however appear to have impacted positively on the teacher identities of at least Elizabeth and Claire, enhancing their empathy for the children they taught or teach. Some incidents were presented as critical, but on examination did not actually occasion self-reappraisal. For example, Paul was keen to tell of the day he realised

he was a writer, but that was not the event that made him a writer; rather it seems to be part of his personal mythology.

In everybody's account, critical incidents were more numerous during childhood and rare in adulthood. This could simply be because most learning takes place in childhood, or because adults, with their experience of life, are less likely to be surprised or impressed. It could also be that while people are prepared to position their childhood self as vulnerable, they are less willing to do so for their adult self.

Recognition and active encouragement by significant individuals have a role to play in each of the five life-histories. Claire attributes her love of teaching to the influence of her in-school mentor, and her two encounters with Pie Corbett could be considered the foundation of her writer identity and a serious influence on her teacher identity too. All but Claire (who has negative stories to tell about several teachers) speak of particularly influential teachers, whose power lay in inspiration or encouragement rather than instruction. Often this is through visibly leading their lives 'in literate ways' (Kaufman, 2002, p.56). All but Claire have at least one teacher they talk about by name, among them Andy's larger than life boarding school teacher Mr. Brambell, Elizabeth's Jean Brodie-like Miss Steele, Paul's Mr. Cliff, who both inspired and created a safe haven within an otherwise challenging environment and Philippa's story-telling Mrs Dyson.

With the exception of Philippa's account of Mrs Dyson's writerly advice, when any of the participants spoke of an inspirational teacher it was never in terms of skills teaching but rather because of their visible commitment to or enthusiasm for literate pursuits. When Mrs

Steele marks a passage of Elizabeth's text as 'BAD', this seems to be simply an exhortation to improve; no detailed advice is given.

All of the participants used narratives to build a picture of their life and position themselves as a particular type of writer or teacher and many extracts of those narratives have featured in the preceding chapters. Often I had a sense that the stories had been told before and had grown into part of the individual's personal mythology; this was certainly the case with Andy, in particular, but he was by no means unique. There were also occasions when people seemed to be articulating a story for the first time; Claire for example, in recounting her discouraging school experiences suddenly declared that she had never before realised how important praise was to her as a learner. This appeared to be a case of identity creation through narration. In Claire's case, narrative episodes were in fact few and usually unelaborated. Of the five, she was keenest to talk about the details of her pedagogy (in an explanatory rather than a narrative way) and seemed quite uncomfortable when asked to talk about herself. It is certainly the case that the other four, as writers, are all more used to framing experiences as narratives, but given the prevalence of narrative in everyday conversation this seems an unlikely explanation for Claire's being different. It may be that too much of my questioning was aimed at unearthing a writer identity that she did not feel strongly, and that she has other stories to tell.

The data show that even at school age, much learning about literacy takes place in informal spaces sometimes on the fringes of school, sometimes with unobtrusive support from parents. Whatever the initial inspiration and external support, all of the participants developed very early a strong personal sense of a literate self, which drove most of them to engage, often with others, in literary activities and has stayed with them through their life.

One way in which these identities are created and maintained is through personal narratives, which through retelling may become a form of personal mythologies which serve to sustain their sense of self as a writer over the years.

The interviews were able to reveal much about the way personal, social and cultural forces work together to create writer, teacher and writer-teacher identities.

Identity and literacy

The interviews sought information on how literacy is related to the participants' personal identity, in particular trying to understand whether the writer-teachers saw their own literacy development as the acquisition of skills or learning to act in literate ways. The relationship between reading and writing was also explored, as was the way writers go about composing and the difficult question of what it means to be a writer. In seeking to understand how writers come to define themselves as such, the interviews explored the relative influence of personal and social factors.

Literacy has held an important place throughout all the participants accounts; they were writing or telling stories from an early age, and they were also avid and, in some cases it would appear, ostentatious readers. Both Paul and Philippa seem aware of the shock value of the way they used libraries and it seems at least possible that Andy's early reading of adult fiction was also designed to impress. In their teaching, literature is an important part of the cultural environment created by Andy and Philippa, who both set great store by frequent reading aloud of stories and poems.

There are many different types of writer and many different types of and purposes for writing, so writer identities are likely to be various and complex. Given that likelihood, it is perhaps surprising to be able to say that three participants in particular appear to have much in common in their writing identity. Andy, Paul and Philippa appear all to be driven to write by some inner force which has no strong need for recognition by readers, friends or family. All speak of their writing process in terms of drafting and revising, though in different ways; Paul and Philippa's breathless production of first drafts contrasts particularly with Andy's very measured approach, which of course, sits better with his being a poet. These practices are presented by each not simply as ways of writing, but as *their own* way of writing. Elizabeth's writing identity is like Andy's in so far as her paramount concern is for the quality of her text and like all three in the way she sees it as arising in part out of her lifelong love of reading. But while Andy, Paul and Philippa would all readily subscribe to the position 'being a writer is what I am', Elizabeth seems only to have been persuaded of her status by the evidence of her output and its recognition by a succession of editors and publishers.

In contrast with these intense identities there is a sense in which almost all members of literate societies are readers and writers, where literacy is one of many characteristics more or less taken for granted, like speaking one's mother tongue or being able to drive. It is part of who we are, but not 'who we are'. This may have been something like Claire's position until a few years ago, but now the reader and writer aspect of her identity is amplified by the fact that the children he teaches, her colleagues, parents and wider society recognise her expertise to teach the subject, and further amplified by her recently acquired specialist expertise and status.

All five participants claim to be writers, but all have some difficulty in defining what a writer is. For Paul, Andy and Philippa, their compulsion to write puts the question beyond doubt for them. For these three the definition seems to come from within, to be part of their subjective self. Elizabeth and Claire's understanding of their writer identity is more dependent on others. Claire can only consider herself a writer because she can teach writing, while Elizabeth writes in order to teach her readers. All of them, however, set store by the skill and expertise they have as practised writers (or in Claire's case, a practised teacher). Elizabeth is as concerned to bring her writing to perfection (in her case in terms of clarity) as is the poet, Andy.

Writing often involves the cultivation of a personal voice but always involves socially and culturally created practices too; writers, no matter how individual their style, do not invent the writing system for themselves. Andy, Paul, Philippa and Elizabeth all talk of early experience of creating stories in a social context: Andy entertaining his schoolmates in the dormitory, Paul writing in the classroom for a school audience, Philippa writing stories for her parents to read and Elizabeth collaborating with her whole family to write a magazine.

Much of what Andy, Paul and Philippa say positions them as individuals without any need for the support of others and they each speak ambivalently (or inconsistently) about the value of audience for them. All do, however, find ways to publish their work and Elizabeth and Philippa both regularly attend support groups to share their work in progress. Elizabeth's purpose as a writer, as noted above is more outward looking: there would be no point to her writing without an audience.

Personal agency, in terms of the freedom to write when they wanted to and on subjects of their own choosing and making seems to have been central to the early formation of the writer identities of Andy, Paul and Philippa.

Although the participants were chosen because of their interest in writing, as may have been expected, in their lives it is impossible to separate writing from other literacy activities such as reading and storytelling. It is also impossible to divorce literacy from the context of its various practices. All of the writer-teachers appear to have adopted certain practices in respect of writing as their own, so that these have become a central part of their writing identity.

Writing and pedagogy

The starting point for this investigation was the idea that teachers who are also writers will have some advantage in teaching writing; is it possible to identify ways in which this might be so? Is it, for example, a matter of identification, giving children a role model to emulate, or is it a question of experts being better instructors?

The classroom is not the kind of environment a writer would usually expect to write in, so if writer-teachers are to exploit their writer identity in their teaching they must find effective ways of interacting with their students as writers. For example, encouraging and enthusing her pupils is one way in which Philippa uses her writer identity in school. Philippa is the only participant who talks about sharing the joys of writing, and that is in terms of hitting targets for words written rather than anything intrinsic to her texts. The only other potential for sharing agonies and ecstasies (Augsburger, 1998) seems to be in Andy and Paul's modelling

of writing; there is no mention of teachers empathising with the joy and frustrations of children's own writing. Andy and Paul show their authority (Wood and Lieberman, 2000) as writers in the act of creation and, in Paul's case, preparing work for publication. Elizabeth uses her own ability to generate clearly understood texts to guide her as she helps adults untangle the knots in their own drafts. Andy, Paul and Philippa certainly give the impression that their pupils are motivated to write by their example of writer-teachers, just as they were inspired in their own childhood and youth by charismatic teachers and a writer in residence.

Of the five participants, Philippa and Claire are the two who speak most often (and most favourably) about the value of teaching specified skills and language features, and Elizabeth is also keen to stress that this aspect of writing should not be overlooked. All five, however, characterise their teaching in terms of literacy practices (Heath 1983). For Claire and Philippa's class lessons these entail embedded practices designed to cultivate target skills (Blau, 1988; Fletcher and Portalupi, 2001), but Philippa's writers' club allows children to develop their own writing practices, exercising agency and creativity as they develop their stories and other texts (Cremin, 2006), just in the way that Philippa herself does.

As teachers, most talk of nurturing writing through social practices. Philippa's writers' club allows children to write and support each other's writing as they wish, as well as giving opportunities to publish. Andy has developed ways of collaboratively creating texts with his class, and routines for solo writing; Paul has established practices relating to, among other things, preparing texts for on-line publication. Philippa's and Claire's teacher-focussed lessons also develop particular literacy practices, and though these owe little to writing

practices of the kind described by the authors in this study, they do have outcomes in terms of the way in which children write.

The concept of modelling illustrates the dichotomy between modelling language and modelling behaviour. All but Elizabeth talk in some detail about their practice of modelling writing (Fletcher and Portalupi, 2001), but in two distinct ways. When composing text in front of his class, Paul is intent on showing the experience he has of making difficult decisions, even if that means coming to a complete halt or abandoning a text and starting again (Cremin and Baker, 2010). Andy, at first perhaps unwittingly, but later consciously, recruited his classes in a collaborative drafting process which owed much to his personal experience as a writer. These are attempts to at least appear to write in an authentic way for the benefit of children's learning (Hall, 1999).

To some extent, both teachers' practice is a representation of authentic activity rather than authentic activity itself; sitting alone at a desk, each may be exercising a single, writer identity, but in the classroom, responsible for thirty or so children he is enacting a complex writer-teacher identity. And from the point of view of the children in the class he is always, as Andy says, the teacher. This may still, however, be the most feasible way of giving children working in a classroom some insight into the ways of writers that a classroom can afford.

Modelling writing is quite a different phenomenon for Philippa and Claire, who begin with a very clear idea of the language they expect to see emerge from quite firmly directed classroom collaborations. Since Claire does not claim to be a writer outside the classroom

she would not claim to be demonstrating a writer's behaviour, and although Philippa says she takes advice on structuring her texts from on-line resources it seems unlikely that her rapidly drafted stories owe much to the deliberate inclusion of particular sentence types. For these two, the demonstration is of the type of text expected, not the writer's practices (Brooks, 2007).

These approaches map onto the distinction between demonstration writing and joint composition (Cremin and Baker, 2010) discussed in Chapter 2. Paul's practice looks like demonstration writing; Andy's looks very much like joint composition. Philippa and Claire are also pursuing a form of joint composition, though clearly their most important aim is to demonstrate particular text features. The three teachers' lessons may in reality have much in common. Although Andy will not have been looking to foster specific language he makes it clear that he favoured and fostered 'good' language that occurred, with the whole canon of English literature his guide, rather than pre-specified items. And both types of lesson should result in the production of a meaningful text, even though for Claire and Philippa that is a necessary (but important) by-product.

As already noted, personal agency was important in Andy's, Paul's and Philippa's early writing, though only for Paul was this an official school activity. Paul and Philippa facilitate free writing mostly through popular extra-curricular activities, undertaken with enthusiasm by the children they teach.

There is evidence, then, that at least some of these writer teachers bring particular writing skills to bear in their teaching, but that is only part of the story. Visibly conducting their life

'in a literate manner' is also important. As children, many of the participants were inspired to write by the enthusiasm for literature and writing of their teachers and by the evidence of their own students writing in out-of-school time shows how enthusiasm, acting as a role model or being an empathetic fellow writer can lead children to choose to be writers.

Reflexive analysis

In Chapter 1, I set out my personal history as a writer and teacher of writing, in the process revealing my understanding of both writing and of how it is best taught. Those understandings were built largely on my own experience and reading, but they were also developed through a long period of working collaboratively with other teachers. This study has enabled me to test those beliefs against the experiences of five writer-teachers, and, as I acknowledged in Chapter 1, those beliefs and understandings will inevitably have coloured both the way I conducted the interviews and my provisional and final analysis.

Probably my most significant personal influence on the data was in the way it was collected. As explained in Chapter 3, the nature of the interviews was conversational around a loose common structure and in each many additional questions supplemented the four starter questions. The course taken by the interviews will inevitably have been influenced by my own understanding of writing and teaching, both directly in terms of the questions asked and indirectly, because the rapport experienced is affected by the degree to which our understanding of writing and teaching (and also of other aspects of life and educational experience) is shared.

Sometimes in a question, an aspect of my knowledge is clearly visible. When Paul mentioned children coming to him with a text they want to publish in the library, I asked if he acted as a quality control, a question obviously inspired by my familiarity with process writing practices. At another point I asked him if he thought there was a difference between real writing and school writing. This was not a non-sequitur as it followed directly from Paul's assertion that 'using a variety of adverbs' (a curriculum requirement) is not 'what makes good writing' but it does reveal a particular pedagogical interest of my own. Similarly, I asked Claire to distinguish between two senses of modelling, asking children to reproduce certain forms of language and asking them to copy the teacher's behaviour. This is a question which relates to my own reading (see Chapter 2), but again one which follows from the participant's introduction of the concept. It is worth noting that she had just talked about modelling powerful sentences and I chose to explore the idea of modelling, one with which I was more familiar, rather than the also interesting concept of powerful sentences. Of course another reason why I pursued 'modelling' is that it was an idea almost all the other participants talked about. Such examples serve to illustrate the subtleties of interviewing and, moreover, the power of the interviewer to deepen and extend an idea, whether confidently or tentatively presented.

In fact, the great majority of questions asked in all the interviews either pick up a theme (which I deemed to be relevant to my research) introduced by a participant or seek clarification, often following an apparent contradiction. In all the interviews, however, I always let an unclear or questionable matter drop rather than pursue it to the discomfort of the participant.

If my effectiveness in gaining information depends on the strength of my rapport with each participant this should be reflected in the length of their interview. These certainly do vary: Elizabeth and Andy both spoke to me (each in two interviews) for around two hours and Philippa and Paul for around an hour and a half, while the interview with Claire lasted barely an hour. There are, of course, other possible explanatory factors. For example, the older the participant the longer the interviews: Andy and Elizabeth simply had more life-history raw material to share, and perhaps because they were looking back over a whole career they were more given to reflective discursions. I think Andy would have spoken at length in any circumstances; after the second interview he apologised for 'going on', saying 'you ask me a question, I give you a novel'. Moreover, these two were both self-employed, so able to allocate a period of time to each meeting. The interviews with the (younger) serving teachers, on the other hand, had to be fitted into gaps in the teaching day or (in Paul's case) at the end of Friday afternoon. I am tempted to say that ideally I'd have liked all the interviews to have been the same length, but it would be contradictory to base a study on personal and individual identities and then expect each of the individuals to have exactly the same number of words to say. In reality my concern was to ensure that all the participants had the chance to say as much as they wanted about the topics I broached. I think this was the case with Elizabeth and Andy (they could have as long as they wanted) and also for Claire and probably Philippa. I think Paul probably could have said more.

Shared life experience and understanding are likely to have played a role in the way the interviews played out, too. Andy and Elizabeth are closest to my own age and the school system they describe working in is very familiar to me. Elizabeth's job, writing books and teaching materials for an audience of educational practitioners is also similar to my own, as is her life-long educational history. Andy taught in the same county as me at around the same time-we have even, briefly, worked in the same school. Our children went to school

together and when he talks, for example, about writing poetry for his own children I can visualise the incidents he outlines. When he talks about teaching in the 70s and 80s he knows there is contextual information that he does not need to supply. Such shared experience is in shorter supply in the interviews with Paul, Philippa and Claire. I left each interview with the impression that the basic craft of teaching remains as it was when I was in the classroom, but that the curriculum and what it requires teachers to prioritise has changed a great deal. I was, therefore, less able to pose precise questions about the subtle details of their practice. However, this did not inhibit the flow of conversation with Philippa and Paul. Paul, in fact, allowed the interview to run well over the promised hour and I'm quite sure he could have said more, had he not needed to go home.

With Claire, it was different: the conversation was at times stilted and many of her answers quite brief. Quite possibly, Claire had less she wanted to say than the others: her classroom career had been barely four years and her experience as a writer more narrow than that of the others. A high proportion of her views on teaching writing appeared to be received from a single source (Pie Corbett) (Corbett & Strong, 2011) without a great deal of personal reflection, at least, during the interview. However, I felt ill-equipped to ask questions which would probe deeper and thus reveal more about her practice and understanding. A more detailed knowledge of the current curriculum, of the specific course she had attended or of the work of Pie Corbett may have given me ways to explore at least her pedagogy further.

I am very glad that I included a feedback step into the process of analysis. Sharing my first thoughts with the participants allowed me in most cases to be more confident of the judgements I had made, and in one case to enter deeper into dialogue over specific points. Elizabeth, Paul and Andy all made small but helpful comments and gave their approval.

Claire replied simply that the draft seemed 'fine'. Philippa's response was very informative, providing additional detail on some aspects of her life and correcting some accounts, sometimes because of a misunderstanding on my part, but at other points revising her story. In the interview, for example, she had said that she had stopped writing when (and because) her first novel had been rejected by a publisher. Commenting on the draft, however, she wrote that she had in fact made a good start on a new novel after the rejection and it was when she had a baby and then started teaching that her writing tailed off, owing simply to lack of time.

The depth of Philippa's engagement may stem in part from the fact that sometimes she did not agree with the picture I was painting. At the time of drafting I was considering giving each writer-teacher a descriptive title, and had tentatively added (along with two or three other thoughts) the admittedly glib, 'enthusiastic conformer', a description Philippa could not accept. Perhaps the fact that she disagreed strongly with something so early in the text stimulated her to approach the rest of it more critically. In any event, Philippa's responses significantly enriched the final draft.

Reflecting on my experience of interviewing has made me aware of the way in which an interview can be regarded as an intricate 'language game' (see Wittgenstein, 1965). It requires a participant to feel confident about sharing and exploring ideas with another, usually someone they have not met before. The extent to which I was successful in establishing rapport, often in different ways, with each of my five interviewees was a critical dimension of both my methodology and the significance of the data I collected.

Key themes of the analysis naturally owed much to the original design of the interviews and the planned and unplanned questions I asked, and both these things derive ultimately from my own understanding of the fields of knowledge that surround writing and teaching. Although I coded each participant's interview(s) individually, the sets of categories arising were, in fact, all very similar, though the proportions of data in each category varied from person to person and there was a degree of variation in the sub-categories that emerged. In these I was able to bring together evidence of consistent themes as well as some contradictions so that as the analysis deepened it became more individual. As explained in Chapter 2, the methodology adopted is an interpretive one and so, of course, the analysis is a product both of what the participants said and my own understandings.

Overall, I was satisfied that this methodology gave me the kind and quantity of data I was seeking; the final group of five writer teachers revealed a good deal of diversity, as well as much that two or more participants held in common. In particular I felt the open, narrative style of interviewing enabled participants to give a full account of themselves as teachers and writers in their own way. However, as I was working, inevitably a number of possible modifications came to mind. On occasion, looking at the transcribed interviews, I found statements which I considered questionable, in the literal sense that I would have liked the chance to ask more. Often this was in connection with matters of classroom practice, and in particular choices and decisions said to have been made by children. Such questions could be further illuminated by use of lesson observations and also by interviewing the children themselves, either individually or in groups. Those strategies could be effectively combined by asking children to comment on aspects of a recently observed lesson.

As explained in Chapter 2, I ruled out undertaking more than one interview with each participant largely on the grounds that I could not expect teachers to give me a lot of their time. I still have reservations about asking teachers to make a longer term commitment, but my experience with asking for written feedback on my draft chapters alerted me to the value of strategies for making the data richer by extending the dialogue. This could be done by exploring it in greater depth and detail in a succession of interviews, with each building on the findings of the preceding one, using the previous interview's transcript, or better still a draft of the analysis as the basis for discussion. As well as affording more detailed data such a process would gradually eliminate superficial and ambiguous statements and allow each account to reflect more closely the individuality of its subject. Data from observations and interviews with children could also be drawn on, but I recognise that dealing with any contradictory evidence would sometimes require great skill and tact, not only in the interview but in the subsequent writing too. Such an approach would require spending much more time both directly with each writer-teacher and in working on their data. It would probably, therefore, be necessary to reduce the number of participants in the study, or to collaborate with a small team of researchers.

Given sufficient time and resources it would be illuminating to study a more varied range of writers. The writer identity felt most strongly by the majority of those in this study was 'creative writer': writers of fiction and poetry, and these formed a homogeneous group, in many ways contrasting with the one other professional writer. A group of writers including, for example, journalists (reporters and columnists), ghostwriters, advertising copywriters, technical authors and academics might provide further insights. Given the difficulty I had in finding writer-teachers for this study, that research may need to involve writers who are not teachers.

Further implications

The idea that familiarity with the practice of writing is helpful to primary teachers is well-represented in the research literature (*e.g.* Dix and Cawkwell, 2011; Wood and Lieberman, 2000; Norman and Spencer, 2005) and in the practice of many institutions preparing teachers for the classroom (*e.g.* Domaile and Edwards, 2006; Luce Kapler et al., 2001). Andy, Paul and Philippa all speak of deliberately displaying their literate identities for the purpose of inspiring or encouraging the children they teach, and of having been inspired in their own childhood by teachers they saw as ‘conduct[ing] their own lives in literate ways’ (Kaufman, 2002, p.56). This is not to say that all primary teachers should be writers; a moment’s thought shows that to be an impractical proposal. Is the same teacher also to be an artist, musician, athlete and mathematician? Moreover, the very difficulty of identifying serving writer-teachers for this study suggests that schools will not find recruiting such people easy. However, there is nothing in this study to contradict a view that it would be valuable for all potential teachers to have some positive experience of writing, even if they then choose not to pursue the interest further.

Children willingly take part in Philippa’s writers’ club and take advantage of Paul’s opportunities for publication. Such formal and informal extra-curricular activities could be supplemented by time for free writing within the normal school day.

The contribution of this study

By exploring the ways in which literate identities are created and how they might subsequently have a role to play in the practice of teachers, this study has revealed the importance of such affective factors as enthusiasm and empathy in both becoming a writer and acting as a teacher. It has also cast light on how frequently learning takes place out of

school; not just in the supportive and literate homes which some but not all of the participants grew up in, but also in activities such as make believe play and storytelling originated by children themselves, with their peers. Motivation, too, has been a theme. Children may be motivated to write by the empathy and enthusiasm of a writer teacher, but they are also motivated personally; Paul and Philippa do not have to force children to undertake out-of-school writing. Motivation harnesses the power of personal agency, it does not overpower it.

Central to this research has been the relationship between the subjective self and changing identities developed through culture and society. The four participants in this study who regularly write for purposes other than teaching have been greatly influenced by a literary culture and all give examples of encounters with adults and children who have furthered their literary identity. Through these social and cultural interactions they have forged a strongly held sense of a writer self. One of the ways this subjectivity is developed and maintained is through the telling and retelling of narratives, narratives which very often downplay the role of others in their literary development. In turn, these narratives may contribute to the creation of a personal mythology of a writer inspired from within. As well as revealing many external influences on identities, and writing identities in particular, this study has shown the central role played by a personal sense of being a writer.

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Appendix 1

Interview schedules

1. Pilot phase interview schedule

Writing interview outline

1. Tell me about how you learnt to write
 - *e.g.: earliest memories, rôle of home/parents/ schools/higher education and other adult experiences.*
 - *can you identify any critical incidents (including, influential (positive and negative) interventions from teachers, parents and others), milestones, stages*
 - Tell me how you felt about yourself as a writer?
e.g. competence, confidence and self-image. What helped you, what frustrated you?
 - Has writing contributed in any way to how you see yourself?
(in terms of learning, formation of ideas, presentation of self ...)
2. As an adult, what kinds of writing do you do? How do you go about the job of writing something.
 - *what processes and routines do you go through? Are they different for different types of text?*
 - *what do you think you know about writing that you didn't learn at school?*
 - *To what extent would you describe yourself as a writer? What criteria do you apply?*
 - *What do you think we do when we write words on a page?*
3. When you teach writing what kind of ideas guide the way you teach it?

As a teacher, what kinds of writing activities do you expect of your pupils?

- *ie the full range of writing activities*

How do you get children writing? What support do they need to get started? What support do they need to keep going?

What influences do you detect in the writing children do?

- *what do you do to encourage/discourage these influences?*

How important to you is it that children have an opportunity to record their 'own ideas' in writing?

- *how far do you feel it safe to put children in charge of their writing?*

Have there been changes in your own practice and beliefs about the teaching of writing over the years ? *perhaps in response to critical incidents, events*

Can you summarise any core beliefs and values you hold about teaching writing? Have these always been in line with the views of colleagues around you? How have you dealt with differences?

4. What do you perceive as having been substantive influences on your approach to teaching writing? *(e.g. from initial training and CPD, LEA, management in school, national policies, inspection)*

How, in particular, have you experienced the influence of national policies in your practice?

How have you reconciled required changes with your personal beliefs, practices and values? How do you react to the idea that there is 'one correct way' of teaching writing?

5. Is there anything you'd like to add?

2. Substantive phase interview schedule

Interview outline

Early history

Tell me about your childhood memories of writing

Prompt:

- *rôle of home/parents/ schools/teachers/others –sense of audience*
- *relationship with reading, other ‘arts’, play*
- *critical incidents (including, influential (positive and negative) interventions from teachers, parents and others), stages*

Can you say how you felt about yourself as a writer at different stages?

e.g. competence, confidence and self-image. What helped you, what frustrated you? Any significant changes?

Adult experience

As an adult, what kinds of writing do you do? How do you go about the job of writing something.

Prompt:

different process for different text types

How is your adult way of writing similar to/different from what you learnt in school/as a child

Prompt:

What do you know about writing that you didn’t learn at school

Why might it be different?

Prompt:

Purpose?

Critical incidents: has anything (thing or event) in your adult (post-18) life changed the way you write or see yourself as a writer?

To what extent would you now describe yourself as 'a writer'?

What criteria do you apply?

Teaching writing

Tell me how you go/went about teaching writing

Prompt;

*range of activities; getting them started; supporting as they write
children's own ideas/experiences; place of skills vs content; ownership
what kind of ideas (principles) guide the way you teach?
how did you learn to teach writing? (e.g. training, CPD, mentor/
influential colleague, personal reflection)*

***What would the children you teach/taught say are the qualities of a
good writer? Prompt:***

What do you think influences them in this view?

***Have there been changes in your own practice and beliefs about
the teaching of writing over the years ?***

Prompt:

*critical incidents, events, personal reflection
conflicts e.g. with school ethos, parents, National Curriculum/strategies*

Participant's contribution

Is there anything you'd like to add?

Prompt:

anything at all!

Appendix 2

Examples of analysis documents

1. Analysis sheet: Philippa

Audience

they would always kind of em be reading my stories and my poems like whenever I'd written anything like you know sort of encourage me with it and say they liked it and em.. kind of show it to their friends and things like that it was just em.. I always got lots of like notebooks and pencils and pens and that sort of thing and would just be encouraged to do it.. I just suppose every time I'd done something there was.. they were really pleased to see it so it did encourage me to keep going I suppose if someone, like if no one had said 'Oh that's good' you'd kind of think Oh I'm not doing very well, don't you. They always seem to like it.

Any particular high spots, any sort of.. good events that you can remember?

Ah...Like There was this, this poem that I wrote, that was really good and they thought I'd copied it from somewhere, but I hadn't and that was kind.. you know you got to copy it out in really neat writing and stuff, erm that was really good. Ermn.. I'm just trying to think, I mean I'd enter competitions and things like that and that made you feel good if they thought you were good enough to enter a competition. I don't remember, I don't think I won anything, but just like being asked to do it was always really good. You know, like the letter writing competition and poetry competitions and things like that. You'd think, Oh you know, they think I'd have a chance

So teachers would approach you and say ...

Yeah, encourage you to do that.

I just thought I really want to do something about a teenage space pilot

I wrote a book after I finished university I took six months off, just to try, you know try and write a book and I sent it off to like a literary agent and he sent me back like two pages of really good quality feedback about like kind of the writing process and about like getting readers invested in your characters and about how your plot should develop. And erm that was really useful

we have erm, like I'm in this writers' group and we'd sort of talk over ideas and people maybe give me a little bit more feedback

you're part of a writing group yeah do you share drafts with them.

Erm, sometimes. Erm kind of we do a little bit of feedback, not too much cause it's erm, it's a very kind of, it's a writing group for kind of quite shy people I think cause you know you get some writing groups that are quite robust erm, there's one that my friend told me about where they kind of they verys.. they're very sharp critiquers like you know, they'll really give you feedback on your work, but sometimes, you know, there can be a little bit of.. I don't know like sometimes people don't always have your best interests at heart and what one person thinks is not what another person might think. So I think that's good in a way for improving your skills, but I think sometimes you want a bit kind of more constructive feedback. Erm so we kind of like, we share stories, everyone's pretty positive really, like if you share your ideas they'll kind of encourage you and they'll say oh, what of you did this, what of you did that? And we did a few things like exercises where you write down your part and then you pass it round, people do like consequences like guessing maybe a character trait your character could have or erm an interesting thing that could happen and you get it back and it's up to you whether you use it or not, but sometimes you'd get a really good idea and you think 'ah' and that would kind of take you off into something you hadn't thought of before [27.54].

Er and are these children's books, did you say?

Ah Yeah yeah, there's erm the one I write for kind of 8 to 12 year olds, the next one's meant for teenagers, actually the next two are teenagers then there's another one that I'm still halfway through that seems like sort of again 8 to 12 year olds. So a bit more of a kind of a fun..like pirates and like flying horses and stuff and I read a bit to the class and they quite liked it, so it was quite good, I'll try and finish it.

And things like having those books published last year I got some extra ones for the school library for the school and er just seeing that they could actually be in print I think that's quite er you know, quite inspirational for them s

obviously they know that I always read their work and that their parents are gonna read it but we also we have like a class blog and er we have people read that from all over the world erm it has like a flag counter on it and people come and read it from like all..all sorts of

places, like we've had people from like Asia and er like Honduras and like every time I go on there's a new flag and they'll be like 'Oh so and so's gone and looked at our blog and their writing goes on there I started off kind of letting them do whatever they want but then I said, you know, we've got this audience you've gotta make sure that what you write on there is really good and really effective

there's a school newspaper that some children can write for as well and erm get their writing read by the whole school as well and people in the community and... that kind of thing, I think

I've got to write the best I can because someone's gonna read this

2. Extract from coded data table: Philippa

School experiences	
Natural aptitude/ precocity	Erm I don't really know.. like my teacher said at a parents' evening to my parents that I was born 30 years too late .. so that was like her opinion [laughs] She said I was born in the wrong age.
Laissez faire	<p>... cause I could read and I could write I was kinda left a lot o the time. That, that's the sort of feeling I get. I don't know kind of like how they would see it.</p> <p>I don't remember so much at school, like being taught writing explicitly , I just remember being given like, write a story about ... some animals and then you just had to get on with it, but I always really enjoyed it when we got a decent creative writing thing</p>
Perceived as freedom at the time	at the time I was just happy cause it was like oh just go and write a story , I was like, Cool, I will. {laughs, then thoughtfully..} yeah.
Didn't mind it at the time But with hindsight seen as neglect (better word needed) ... you know, they probably could o done other things for me.	<p>I get the feeling that there were children in the class who need a lot o help and I feel like they got a lot o help and I kinda got left to just sort of ... cause I could read and I could write I was kinda left a lot o the time.</p> <p>I don't actually remember being taught anything, like not at primary school anyway, like being taught how to, like how to improve grammar or anything like we do now</p>
Disparaging account of 'self-directed' activities.	they'd let you do projects and stuff, but I always want to just do charity events and stuff like can we set up and have a jumble sale and like and can we sell biscuits and they'd always let me sort of follow my projects and stuff, but I don't remember learning anything in particular, I remember learning countries and capitals off by heart in Year 5 and [laughs] there was all this kind of like rote stuff or these projects where you weren't actually getting taught anything they were just, they said do something you're interested in and just do work on it that 's just like kinda like the main things that I remember doing , I think

<p>Seems to want a more directed curriculum</p> <p>Also ref here to teacher agency</p>	<p>Yesh, yeah, we didn't have it [NC] there was no numeracy hours or literacy hours we just did whatever, I think we just did whatever that teacher was interested in, so I remember in year five it was mainly history and geography, like that was doing all stuff on the tudors and learning countries and capitals of by heart, and time table tests and stuff erm Year 3 and 4 I don't really remember so much what we did erm I think there was a lot of just play I think I remember like there being still like sand tables and stuff out. And that sort of thing erm, I was trying to learn a bit of French in Year 3, I remember that and trying to like get people to learn French with me but nobody really wanted to [laughs]</p>
<p>Possible admission here that there was more teaching than she remembers.</p>	<p>No, no, I don't remember how I learned to do that erm ... like, I'm trying to think if we ever did anything like kind of grammar lessons or anything like that. I don't remember anything like that. I remember obviously like when we got to high school we learnt more about how to.. how to write more efficiently and things like that erm, but erm, just trying to think if there was anything like, like improving vocabulary, anything like that erm No, it's really hard to remember. I think, I certainly remember things like things where you had to fill in the missing words, that sort of thing, like cloze procedures. But, no, I can't really remember how I got at all the things, it's just strange, isn't it. This feels like I always knew it. Like kind of I absorbed it.</p>
<p>Or maybe it was just that the formal teaching had little impact on her because of her own advanced level of skills.</p>	<p>I just sort of erm, I remember being given spellings every week that I could already spell, so I'd just quickly look at them and think 'I know how to spell those and I wouldn't bother with that</p>
<p>When pressed for a negative memory of school writing she can only offer that she was sometimes frustrated at not having the chance to finish a particular story</p>	<p>Erm. I dunno, there's sometimes where I'd write a story and I'd like have a really good idea and I wouldn't finish it .. er.. and then you sort of think .. I could've done a bit better with that. Erm nothing really negative that I can think of.</p>

<p>She has no memory of learning handwriting either.</p>	<p><i>handwriting ...</i></p> <p>No, no, I don't remember how I learned to do that</p>
<p>Very few memories of teacher intervention. This example feels like collaboration from a teacher (Miss Dixon) later identified as a writer, or at least a story teller.</p>	<p>I remember, but I can't remember totally too much, and I just remembered one other thing that I had where a teacher came up, and this was direct input, I was writing a story like, about these two people who met on an island and someone said 'Oh, what's your name?' and the other one said 'Hi, I'm Barney', said Barney. And she said 'well if you've said 'I'm Barney you don't need to put 'said Barney' because it's there and I was like 'aaaah'.so that was kind of like my first, you know, show don't tell, I guess.</p> <p>Yeah, that's the only teacher I remember getting input with my writing, it was the same one both times</p>
<p>Overall, Nicola appears puzzled by her school experiences. She clearly learnt to become a proficient writer, but has little recall of being taught anything in particular.</p>	<p>But, no, I can't really remember how I got at all the things, it's just strange, isn't it. This feels like I always knew it. Like kind of I absorbed it.</p>
<p>Another intervention, obviously focused on the text she was writing, and which she sees as significant in her personal development as a writer, she appears to belittle as it did not seem to be part of a planned strategy.</p>	<p>I just remember there was one time I wrote a poem about these 2 birds and erm, I remember at that point, where I was starting to get a bit more plot into it and that was the main first thing I remember being taught about, sort of, ah yeah, where's the story gonna go with this? Er rather than just having these 2 charcters, so that was a little bit of input at that point. Erm, but yeah, it was .. it didn't seem very structured I don't know like sort of if the teacher had plans.</p>

Though she does admit that the teacher may have brought more to the encounter than she was area of.	I don't know like sort of if the teacher had plans.. maybe, I mean you're not always aware of what's going on, are you? That's what I remember
No negative experiences in writing	there was never anything bad
Only scrape was because of being too keen.	there was just like, I said like with reading, where you get in trouble, cause they thought you weren't paying attention but it's because you were sort of further on in the book.
Positive experience in terms of acclaim	Ah...Like There was this, this poem that I wrote, that was really good and they thought I'd copied it from somewhere, but I hadn't and that was kind.. you know you got to copy it out in really neat writing and stuff, erm that was really good.
The positive experience of entering writing competitions is the joy of being recognised and selected, rather than in winning.	Ermn .. I'm just trying to think, I mean I'd enter competitions and things like that and that made you feel good if they thought you were good enough to enter a competition. I don't remember, I don't think I won anything, but just like being asked to do it was always really good. You know, like the letter writing competeion and poetry competetions and things like that. You'd think, Oh you know, they think I'd have a chance

<p>Inspired by the story telling of Miss Dixon</p>	<p>Yeah, mm she was called miss Dixon and she was a bit older, I had her in Year three and then I had her agin in year 6. So I had her twice and I just thought.. she used to This is one.. I should've said this, I've just rememberers, She wrote stories herself</p> <p><i>Aha</i> [laughs] She would tells us these stories about naughty rabbit who lived in a green dustbin at the bottom of her garden. So like whenever there was a spare moment she would kind of just make up a story on the spot, or maybe she was retelling them but she'd just tell you these stories that she's made up and I always thought that was amazing, I really liked it whenever she's tell us a naughty rabbit story erm and she was you know quite lively and you know, wem really nice and encouraging like she'd give me puzzles to do and stuff er and that sort of thing she was the one who'd give me the comic strip pictures to work on and like [unclear –'help me with'???] my writing.. the best , I think</p> <p>I don't think they were actually written down, she would just come up to the front of the class. And erm, she'd sort of draw the dustbin on the blackboard in green chalk and tell you the story. So she was just telling it from her memory rather than straight out of a book. Yeah, it was really er, that was one of the best times, I think, like hearing the stories, that's one of the strong memories I've got.</p>
<p>Miss D gave writerly support</p>	<p>she was the one who'd give me the comic strip pictures to work on and like [unclear –'help me with'???] my writing.. the best , I think.</p> <p><i>Also, see above</i></p> <p>I was writing a story like, about these two people who met on an island and someone said 'Oh, what's your name?' and the other one said 'Hi, I'm Barney', said Barney. And she said 'well if you've said 'I'm Barney you don't need to put 'said Barney' because it's there and I was like 'aaaah'.so that was kind of like my first, you know, show don't tell, I guess.</p>
<p>Fellow-writerly support</p>	<p><i>This is a leading question .. did you ever get the sense that when she was talking to you she was talking to you as one writer to another</i></p> <p>[quickly, loudly and enthusiastically] Yeah, yeah, definitely, Yea it did feel like that, cause she would make up these stories and you know, encourage me with my stories mm yeah</p>

<p>She isn't modelling the process of writing. Rather the condition of being a creative person and bringing a story to life. Inspiration is the key.</p>	<p>Oh she didn't, I don't think they were actually written down, she would just come up to the front of the class. And erm, she'd sort of draw the dustbin on the blackboard in green chalk and tell you the story. So she was just telling it from her memory rather than straight out of a book. Yeah, it was really er, that was one of the best times, I think, like hearing the stories, that's one of the strong memories I've got.</p>
<p>A vague recollection that things became more rigorous at secondary school.</p>	<p>I remember obviously like when we got to high school we learnt more about how to.. how to write more efficiently and things like that erm, but erm, just trying to think if there was anything like, like improving vocabulary, anything like that erm No, it's really hard to remember.</p>
<p>One event deemed 'really useful' seems to have arisen from a happy coincidence (N and a friend having complementary needs/ shortcomings) and peer support.</p> <p>The complementary needs of N's friend are fortunate in enabling what could have been a discouraging critical incident to stimulate learning thorough peer support.</p>	<p>I remember like, erm getting this essay back and erm , I was told that I was too terse and my friend was told that she was too flowery and we tried to learn from each other, like have a look at how they be doing it, cause I used to just sort of get to the point very quickly and then move on, and that really helps, sort of being aware that I had to expand on my ideas a bit more. Erm, that was really useful</p>

Two more definite contributions to her development as a reader and writer,. The first was her introduction to the analysis of poetry, which she enjoyed	And I remember like first learning how to critique poetry in a kind of a more analytical way like in year seven I was like 'Oh this is a bit different' and I like that cause you know sort of em I quite like analysing poetry .. and before that I'd never really thought about it.
In general teachers seem to have left few memories and maybe had little effect.	I don't remember learning anything in particular, I remember learning countries and capitals off by heart in Year 5 and [laughs] there was all this kind of like rote stuff or these projects where you weren't actually getting taught anything they were just, they said do something you're interested in and just do work on it that 's just like kinda like the main things that I remember doing , I think
The second her involvement with a writing group led by a writer in residence	And erm there was this thing I got into in year eight it was the er like writing group and we had a writer in residence came in and he worked with about ten of us, I think, and we'd go off, we got taken out to the docks at South Shields and there we just went and did some sort of writing out there and it was we sort of went on these trips and then we'd meet up in the library and get to share our ideas and we wrote like a collaborative pantomime and that was a really good experience, working with a professional writer an getting to develop that way, that was excellent, ahm, and then can't really, can't think of anything else
Underlies how she sees hew pupils' perceptions	I do think its quite inspirational for them to see their teachers writing, cause it was for me when I was young and I think that it has been for like the children that I've taught, you know, seeing like you know it's something you can do throughout your life , not just 'cause the teacher asks you to, people can enjoy doing it and erm that they can do it when they're older.

<p>Later, in the sixth form, Nicola had her interest in reading further stimulated by one charismatic teacher. This experience may have contributed to the detailed and analytical way she approaches her own writing today.</p>	<p>The ones I had for A level, they were more interesting, I had this man called erm Norman Bewick he was really like a kind of larger than life guy and he like, he started off by saying Shakespeare is rubbish and like kind of challenge you to disagree with him and that sort of thing, like why it was good, and we did 'Streetcar named desire;' and he was just kind of er he got us to do more creative writing around books rather than jjust doing the analysing and it really got you interested in it in a better way, I think.</p>
<p>He also deliberately widened her reading experience beyond the exam syllabus, something Nicola appreciates.</p>	<p>Oh like, er, when we were doing ah, we looked at 'all the world's a stage' and you had to write your own version of it like a modern version or a version about women that sort of thing erm and we read a bit of like Harold Pinter and we had to act that out and .. It was just like lots of different ways he got us like you know like showing ius really like things that weren't on the course but just like sort of Pinter and Becket and stuff like that that wre just really good Englsih , just sort of giving you a flavour of lots of things that you might be interested in</p>
<p>Influences</p>	
<p>Writer in residence –see above</p>	<p>And erm there was this thing I got into in year eight it was the er like writing group and we had a writer in residence came in and he worked with about ten of us, I think, and we'd go off, we got taken out to the docks at South Shields and there we just went and did some sort of writing out there and it was we sort of went on these trips and then we'd meet up in the library and get to share our ideas and we wrote like a collaborative pantomime and that was a really good experience, working with a professional writer an getting to develop that way, that was excellent, ahm, and then can't really, can't think of anything else</p>

<p>Value in being a role model, giving critical feedback, facilitating peer support, modelling/ scaffolding (which) process</p>	<p>Well first you see like that it's a profession and then he'd kind of um, he'd challenge us, like he'd say like why is it written like this, how could you improve this and like [simultaneously: <i>that was talking about your own texts?</i>] help us with editing cause before like ... YUeah yeah he'd look at what we'd written and he'd tell us what was good about it and how it could be improved and help us edit it and then just sort of talking through ideas with other people was really good [20.40] cause if like you were doing it on your own you'd kind of have your own ideas, but then you'd see that if you did put them with other people's ideas you could improve it and make something that was really good all together erm yes.. he was quite encouraging as well and erm it was nice to see other people interested in writing as well</p>
<p>A number of her secondary English teachers made an impression on her</p>	<p>Err, ... not really .. like the er, the teacher I had er at the start of the secondary school was quite strict and she ran the library erm she was quite like kind of you know, you felt you had to get it rightin a way when you worked with her, and then one I had sort of higher up the school, she was really good, she was really into literature and musicals and things like she had all these cool posters around her room of like erm different plays and things like that erm, she took us to see Shakespeare and all that sort of thing. Erm, she wasn't like a real character, I think there were a few English teachers who were you know like the kind of the classic English teacher characters who we had. The ones I had for A level, they were more interesting, I had this man called erm Norman Bewick he was really like a kind of larger than life guy and he like, he started off by saying Shakespeare is rubbish and like kind of challenge you to disagree with him and that sort of thing, like why it was good, and we did 'Streetcar named desire;' and he was just kind of er he got us to do more creative writing around books rather than jjust doing the analysing and it really got you interested in it in a better way, I think.</p>

3. Extract from synthesis table

	Wyl data	Wyl comment	Philipa data	Philipa comment	Andy data	Andy comments		Claire data	Claire comment	Elizabeth data	Elizabeth comment	
Identity and literacy							Identity and literacy					Identity and literacy
Shifting ID to accommodate others, situation etc		Accommodating to teacher colleagues (not going too far.		for me, in feedback????		Resolutely not- does not seek audience for poetry	Shifting ID to accommodate others, situation etc					Shifting ID to accommodate others, situation etc
Joining a CoP or 'literacy club'. (or alienation from)	it was all very task-based you've got to do this for the lesson and what I really wanted to do was develop my own writing, but you didn't get the chance to do that	Alienation from Secondary school Because of vocab. Richard C's classroom as CoP -'haven' (but this opposed to rest of school)		with writer in residence?		Alienated from poetry publication - mainstream poets -not the most forward moving. Children in his class seemed to be dragooned into a literacy club.	Joining a CoP or 'literacy club'. (or alienation from)				Slow to see herself as an academic. Alienated from clever classmates Failed to go to university- felt undergrads cleverer than her Often felt in the company of cleverer people	Joining a CoP or 'literacy club'. (or alienation from)
Professional CoP		Separate from teachers -not one of them		Talks about colleagues and their support		separated from teachers - superior knowledge. Others have other ways of being creative	Professional CoP		Colleagues key to her success		little reference to other teachers	Professional CoP

Different writing selves (M&G)	In school productions and things they would kind of write me into it to do a piece of poetry .. and it seemed quite normal to me.	For performance in school (Audience) Fiction vs bids. Former currently undisciplined, latter very audience/purpose focused.			adult and child poet	Different writing selves (M&G)		all homogeneou s		academic; creative; writer in school	Different writing selves (M&G)
ID through writing/voice also writing practices	a writer is someone who has silly habits that they stick to all the time I write with a certain sort of pen and a certain notebook	Own ID through blogs etc. Disowns hack writing personal writing practices	I kind of see them as being like learning experiences in themselves I think every time you do it you get a bit better	Learning through writing		writing is very personal speaks approvingly of M Rosen's attempts to get children to write poetry in their own voices.	ID through writing/voice	Sees voice as ultimate wish, but achieved through giving many models (Bakhtin!)		children's art	ID through writing/voice

Writing groups	Planning to go –sees it in terms of personal reserving time for writing	if like you were doing it on your own you'd kind of have your own ideas, but then you'd see that if you did put them with other people's ideas you could improve it and make something that was really good all together	Teacher and writer groups enjoyed writing collaboratively	None. Never.	Writing groups	Treated as a class by PC	creative writing group	Writing groups
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